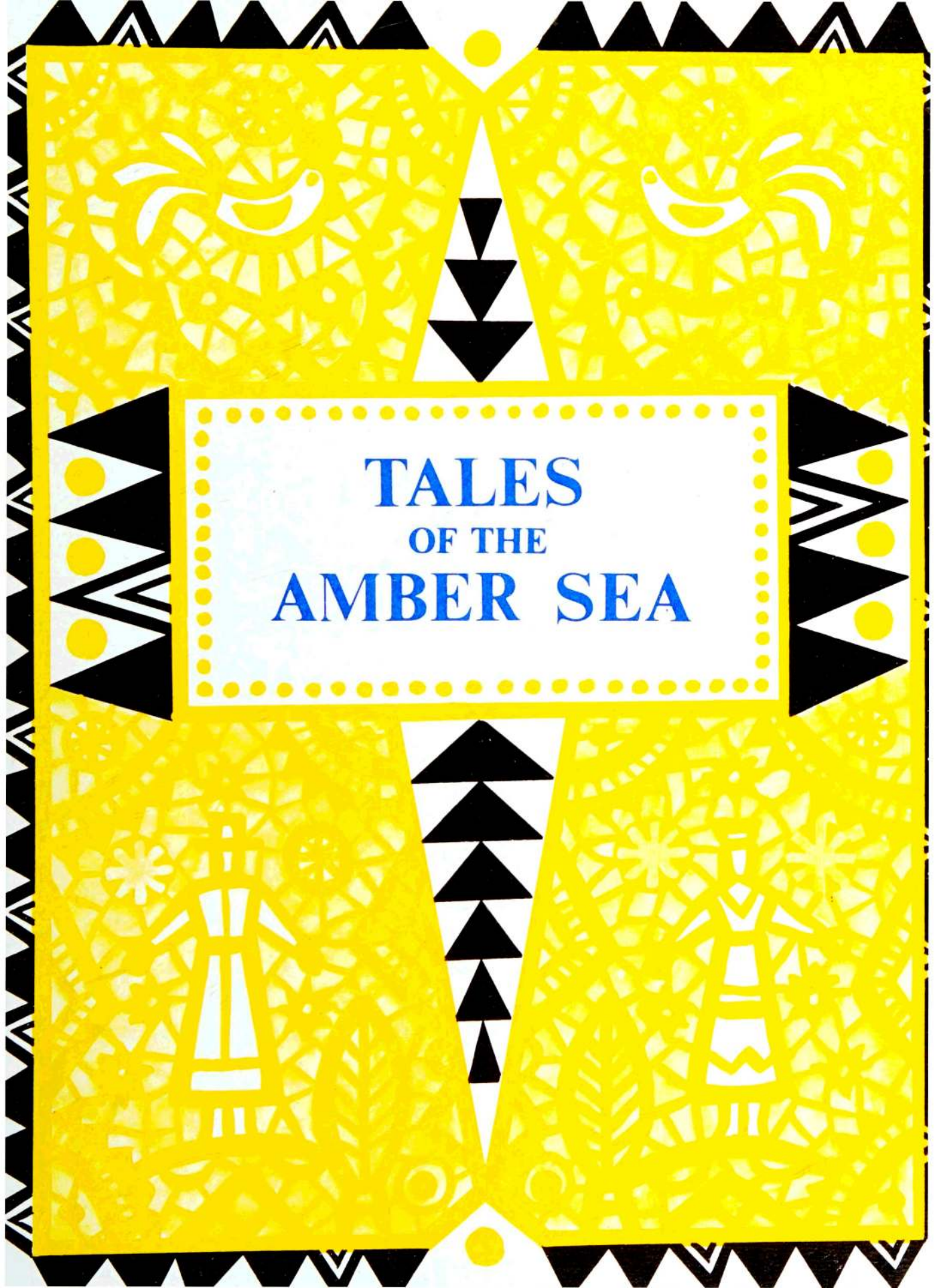
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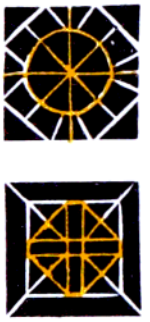
FAIRY TALES OF THE PEOPLES OF ESTONIA, LATVIA AND LITHUANIA



Compiled and retold in English
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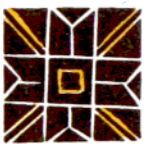


THE MOSQUITO AND THE HORSE

One day a horse was out grazing in the field when a mosquito flew up to him.

"Don't you see me, Horse?" the mosquito asked, for the horse did not seem to notice him.

"I see you now," the horse replied.

The mosquito looked the horse over – he looked at his tail, his back, his hoofs, his neck and at both his ears, one after the other. He looked and he shook his head.

"You're terribly big, friend, aren't you!" he said.

"Well, yes, I'm not what you'd call small," the horse agreed.

"I am much smaller than you."

"You are indeed!"

"And you must be strong, too?"

"Strong enough."

"I don't suppose a fly could get the better of you, could it?"

"Certainly not!"

"Nor a horse-fly?"

"Nor a horse-fly."

"Nor even a gadfly?"

"No. Nor even a gadfly."

The mosquito was pleased.

"The horse is strong but I'm even stronger," thought he, and sticking out his chest, said:

"You may be big and strong, Horse, but we mosquitoes are stronger still. We need only light into you, and you'll be done for. We'll win hands down!"

"No, you won't!" said the horse.

"Yes, we will!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

They went on like that for an hour and then another, but neither would let the other have the last word.

"It's no use arguing," said the horse at last. "We can have it out between us and see who wins!"

"Yes, let's do that!" the mosquito agreed.

He rose from where he had been sitting on the horse's back and called in a piping voice for his friends to hear:

"Come here, all!"

And at once hundreds of mosquitoes came flying up to him. From a birch wood they flew, and from a spruce grove, from the swamps, and the pond, and the river, and they all flew straight at the horse, settled all over him and clung to his body.

"Well, are all of you here now?" the horse asked.

"Yes!" replied the first mosquito who was a bully if ever there was one.

"And has each found a place for himself?"

"Yes!"

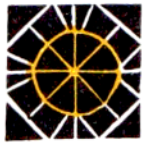
"Then hold tight!" said the horse.

He flung himself down on his back, with his hoofs in the air, and began rolling from side to side, and in less than a minute he had squashed all the mosquitoes. Of the whole mighty host only one little soldier was left alive, although his wings were grazed, and, apart from him, the bully who had made off as soon as he saw he was in danger. That is always the way with bullies: they start a fight and then run away and let others fight for them.

The little soldier now flew up to the bully and saluted him as though he were a general.

"The horse is dead, killed on the spot!" said he. "Had there been only four more of us we might have skinned him alive."

"Good work!" said the bully, and off he flew to the forest to pass on what had happened to the bugs and the ants. For this was no joke! The mosquitoes had vanquished a horse which meant that they were the mightiest tribe on earth.



HOW A RAVEN WOOED A TOMTIT

Once there was a Raven who fell in love with a Tomtit and badly wanted to marry her. Now, for her part, the Tomtit liked the Raven, too, so she invited him to her house and began regaling him with food and drink.

"Why are you so small?" the Raven asked.

"I'm not yet fully grown," the Tomtit replied.

"You're not?" the Raven said, pleased. "Then that means that you'll grow bigger, doesn't it?"

"Of course!" the Tomtit said. "How could it be otherwise?"

They ate and they drank, and the Tomtit felt so bored that she could not keep back a yawn.

"Tell me something interesting," said she to the Raven. "Or else I think I'll fall asleep."

"Listen to this, for instance," the Raven said. "There is a village beyond the forest, and my uncle, who was there once, saw a bean stalk there so tall that you could crawl up it to the clouds."

"That's nothing!" said the Tomtit. "I once saw a bean stalk so tall that if you climbed to the top of it you could reach the sun and light your pipe with one of its rays."

The Raven thought hard.

"Listen to this!" said he. "Three years ago so strong a wind rose in this village I was telling you about that the people there grew used to crawling on all fours. Half a year passed before they went back to walking in the old way again."

"That's nothing!" the Tomtit said. "Five years ago the wind was even stronger. So fast did the arms of the windmills turn that you could hardly see them."

The Raven thought hard again.

"I've just remembered something!" said he. "Ten years ago the frost was so fierce that all the spruce-trees in the forest cracked from top to bottom."

"That's nothing!" said the Tomtit, standing her ground. "Twelve years ago, when I sent my third brood of fledgelings out into the world, the frost was even fiercer. Why, the women's hands froze to the dough they were kneading, and the pots on the stoves boiled at one side and were covered with ice at the other."

The Raven looked troubled.

"Anything might have happened in the old days," he brought out at last with a sigh. And saying that he would be right back, he left the Tomtit's house and flew away.

He did not know if there had ever been a bean stalk as tall as the Tomtit had said or a frost as fierce, but surely she was too old for him if she had seen the stalk with her own eyes and felt the frost!

THE TWO HORSES

Once upon a time there lived a lord's horse and a peasant's horse, and the two of them were great friends. Whenever they met they would talk and never have their fill of talking. But one day the lord's horse came out with something that badly hurt his friend's feelings.

"Unlike me, you are a horse of common breed," he said. "I am always harnessed to a coach mounted on springs, and you to a wagon or a harrow. I am fed on barley, and you on straw. Just look at me. See how slender and beautiful are my legs and how spotless my hoofs! Yours are all caked with mud. My neck is as arched and graceful as a swan's and yours

is far from that. My skin shines like silk and yours drips with sweat. I have a white star on my forehead and you have none. Which of us is more handsome—you or me?"

"You!" said the peasant's horse.

"There you are!" said the lord's horse, lifting his head proudly. "And when I run it's a pleasure to watch me. I move lightly and swiftly, so that the earth itself seems to run from under my feet. You could never do it."

"Maybe not," said the peasant's horse.

"Maybe not!" said the lord's horse with a snort. "It's no use talking about it even. You couldn't outrun a snail, now, could you?"

"No, not a snail," said the peasant's horse. "Now, you are a different matter. I could outrun you easily."

This made the lord's horse very angry indeed, and he snorted again and shook his mane.

"We'll see who outruns who!" said he.

And it was agreed between them that they would run a race, circling the meadow and not stopping till one of them gave up.

The lord's horse threw back his head and started off at a gallop. He outdistanced the peasant's horse by a whole lap, and catching him up on the second lap, left him behind again.

"Isn't it time for you to rest, my friend?" he called, whinnying happily. "You might get tired."

"I won't, never fear," the peasant's horse called back.

On the third lap the lord's horse again caught up the peasant's horse and again left him behind.

"Isn't it time for you to rest? You'll get tired," he called.

"I won't, never you fear!" the peasant's horse called back.

On the fourth lap, too, the lord's horse got ahead of the peasant's horse, but he neighed less loudly now, calling out with nothing like his former confidence:

"Isn't it ... time ... for you ... to rest ... a little?... You'll get ... tired."

"I won't, never fear!" the peasant's horse called back.

"But you seem all out of breath."

"No, it's just that I hurt my foot," the lord's horse lied, galloping on.

On the fifth lap he again got ahead of the peasant's horse, but this time he neither neighed nor called out.

"Why are you groaning, friend?" the peasant's horse asked him.

"I stumbled on a root," the lord's horse replied.

On the sixth and seventh laps the lord's horse could only just keep up with the peasant's horse, and on the eighth, the peasant's horse passed him.

"Why have you fallen behind, friend – tired?" asked he.

"No, I only stopped to give myself time to think," the lord's horse replied. "There's so much one has to think about."

On the ninth lap the lord's horse stopped running and sank to the ground.

"What's the matter, don't you feel well?" the peasant's horse asked him.

"Oh no, I'm all right," the lord's horse said. "It's this horse-fly. I can't run on till I get rid of it."

On the tenth lap the lord's horse got to his feet and hobbled off behind some bushes to nibble at the grass. He avoided looking at the peasant's horse.

"Is it dinner-time, then, Your Lordship?" the peasant's horse called to him.

"It's supper-time," the lord's horse replied crossly. "You'd better take a rest too. We've plenty of time."

"I don't need a rest," said the peasant's horse. "I'm only just starting to warm up. I'll run another ten laps and then another ten and after that we'll see."

And from that day on the lord's horse, so shamed had he been by the peasant's horse, never looked down on anyone any more.

THE KIND WOODCUTTER

Once upon a time there lived a woodcutter, and one day he went to the forest for some firewood. He came up to a birch and waved his axe, and the birch said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! I am young and have many children. What will they do without me?"

The woodcutter took pity on the birch. He came up to an oak and was about to chop it down, but the oak saw the axe in his hands and said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! My acorns aren't yet ripe. Once they are gone, there will be no new oaks growing up around me."

The woodcutter took pity on the oak. He came up to an ash and was about to chop it down, but the ash saw the axe in his hands and said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! Only yesterday did my bride and I plight our troth. What will become of her if I am chopped down?"

The woodcutter took pity on the ash. He came up to a maple and was about to chop it down, but the maple said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! For my children are small and have been taught no trade. They will die without me."

The woodcutter took pity on the maple. He came up to an alder and was about to chop it down, but the alder saw the axe in his hands and said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! This is just the time when I feed the tiny wood bugs with my milk. What will become of them if I am chopped down?"

The woodcutter took pity on the alder. He came up to an aspen and was about to chop it down, but the aspen said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! What was life given me for but for me to rustle my leaves in the wind and frighten the highwaymen at night! What is to become of good and honest folk if I am chopped down?"

The woodcutter took pity on the aspen. He came up to a bird-cherry and was about to chop it down, but the bird-cherry saw the axe in his hands and said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! Don't you know that the nightingales like to perch on my branches and sing their songs? If I am chopped down they will fly away and their songs will be heard no more."

The woodcutter took pity on the bird-cherry.

He came up to a rowan and was about to chop it down, but the rowan said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! I am in full bloom and

will soon be covered with clusters of berries. What will become of the birds who feed on these berries in autumn and winter if I am chopped down?"

The woodcutter took pity on the rowan.

"It's no use, I'll never be able to bring myself to cut down any of the leaf-bearing trees!" said he to himself. "I'd better try my luck with the fir trees."

He came up to a spruce and was about to chop it down, but the spruce saw the axe in his hands and said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! Wait till I grow to my full height, for then you will be able to make floorboards of me. Now, while I'm still growing, people can take joy in the sight of my green branches."

The woodcutter took pity on the spruce. He came up to a pine and was about to chop it down, but the pine saw the axe in his hands and burst into tears.

"Do not kill me, woodcutter!" it begged. "I am still young and strong, and my green branches, like those of the spruce, are a lovely sight, summer and winter. It will sadden people if I am chopped down."

The woodcutter took pity on the pine. He came up to a juniper and was about to chop it down, but the juniper, too, said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! Of all the trees in the forest I do the greatest good. I bring good fortune to all and relief to sufferers from a hundred ailments. What will become of the men and animals who come to me for help if I am chopped down!"

The woodcutter sat down on a hummock and shook his head in wonder.

"I never knew that trees could talk," said he to himself. "Now I know they can, but what am I to do? Their pleas cut me to the quick. I would gladly leave the forest without touching them, but what will my wife say when I get home?"

He lifted his head, and whom should he see coming out

of a thicket but a little old man with a long grey beard! The little old man had on a shirt of birch bark and a coat of spruce bark and he came up to the woodcutter and looked up at him.

"Why so sad?" he asked. "Is something troubling you?"

"There's no reason for me to be happy," the woodcutter told him. "I came to the forest for some firewood, but I cannot bring myself to cut down the trees. They think and feel and talk like we do, and when they plead with me, it breaks my heart."

The little old man smiled.

"Thank you for your kindness, woodcutter," he said. "I am grateful and will repay you for it. From now on you will know great good fortune and never want for firewood or anything else. Only you must not be greedy if you don't want evil to come of good. Take this golden rod and treasure it as you do the apple of your eye!"

And the little old man gave the woodcutter a little golden rod no thicker than a knitting needle.

"If you are in need of a house or a barn," said he, "just wave the rod over an ant hill three times and tell the ants what it is you want, and it will all be done for you by morning. And if you are hungry, tell your cooking pot to cook for you whatever it is you fancy, meat or fish or anything else, and it will do it. Wave the rod over a bee-hive, and honey-combs full of honey will appear before you; wave it over a birch or a maple, and you'll get bowls of birch and maple syrup. The alder will give you its milk, and the juniper will make you strong and healthy. The spiders will spin you a length of silk or some woollen yarn. All this and more will you have in return for having spared my children. For I am the father of the forest, and I rule over it."

And bidding the woodcutter goodbye, the little old man vanished.

Now, the woodcutter's wife was as ill-tempered and spiteful a woman as can be. Seeing her husband coming toward

her empty-handed, she rushed out into the yard.

"Where is the firewood I sent you for?" she cried.

"In the forest. I could not bring myself to chop down the trees," the woodcutter said.

This only made the wife angrier still.

"I've a good mind to take a bunch of birch twigs and give you a hiding with them, you loafer!" cried she.

But the woodcutter waved his rod without her seeing it and said under his breath:

"Let it be my wife and not me that gets the hiding!"

And no sooner were the words out of his mouth than some twigs lying under a tree started up and went at her, and though she tried to run away from them she could not.

"Oh, oh! You're hurting me! Don't! Please don't!" she cried, trying to shield herself from the dancing, stinging twigs.

At last, seeing that she had had a lesson she would not forget, the woodcutter told the rod to make the twigs go back to their place under the tree. But he felt very pleased that he could bring his wife to reason any time he wanted to.

Now, the woodcutter had only one barn and as it was very old, he was badly in need of a new one.

So he went to the forest, found an ant hill, and waved the rod over it three times.

"Build me a new barn, ants!" said he.

And when morning came, he stepped out of his house, and lo!—there in the yard stood a brand-new barn.

From that day on there was not a happier man than the woodcutter in the whole neighbourhood. He did not have to worry about food, for whatever he fancied the cooking-pot cooked for him, and all he had to do was to eat it. The spiders wove his cloth for him, the moles ploughed his fields, and the ants sowed his wheat and harvested it too. And whenever his wife began scolding him, the golden rod brought her to her senses, so that she was the one to suffer most from her own bad temper. Many a husband in our own time and day, I shouldn't wonder, who hears this tale will sigh and

say, "Ah, if only I had a rod like that!"

The woodcutter lived to a ripe old age and never once did he ask the rod to do what was not possible for it to do.

His children, to whom the rod passed after his death, were as careful with it as he had been and because of it lived out their lives as happily as he. But in later years the rod fell into the hands of a man who was foolish and thoughtless and who tried it sorely with his empty demands.

One day he told the rod that he wanted the sun to come down to him and warm his back.

Now, though the rod did its best to try and persuade the sun to do this, it only succeeded in making it angry. It sent down its fiercest rays, and the man's house as well as he himself were burnt to a cinder. As for the rod, it was thought to have melted away, for there was none to say that it hadn't. Only the trees had been there to see, but the sun's scorching rays had so terrified them that they lost the use of their tongues and have remained speechless to this day.

THE KING OF THE MUSHROOMS

Once upon a time some men out hunting for mushrooms in the forest found one that was bigger than any they had ever seen before. They began pulling it out of the ground, and lo!–a little old man sprang out from under it. No larger than a finger he was and had a beard that trailed over the ground. The little old man rushed away but the men ran after him. They caught him and asked who he was.

"I am king of all the mushrooms growing in this forest," said the little old man.

The men did not know what to do. They thought and they thought and could think of nothing better than to give the

little old man for a gift to the king. This they did and the king rewarded them generously and ordered the little old man to be locked up in the cellar. "I shall hold a big feast," said the king to himself, "and show my guests what funny little bearded old men live under the mushrooms in my forest. Meanwhile, he must stay under lock and key."

Now, the king had a young son. One day the boy was in the courtyard playing with a golden egg and he happened to send it rolling through a window straight into the cellar. The little old man saw the egg and snatched it up.

"Give me back my egg!" the boy called to him.

But the little old man called back:

"I won't! Come and get it yourself."

"How can I do that? The door is locked," the boy said.

"That's nothing. The keys are in the palace. Go and fetch them."

The boy did as he was told, and when he had brought the keys, unlocked the door and came down into the cellar. The little old man gave him the golden egg, whisked between the young prince's legs and out of the door and vanished.

The prince, who had not noticed this, now decided to take a good look at the little old man before locking him up again. He gazed round him, and finding the little old man gone, was badly frightened. Locking the door quickly, he took the keys back to the palace and never breathed a word about what had happened to anyone.

The day of the feast arrived and there were many people from all parts of the kingdom who came to attend it. A big crowd gathered round the palace, for everyone had heard that the king had a surprise in store for his guests.

The king now sent a servant to fetch the little old man. The servant returned empty-handed, but when he said that the little old man was not in the cellar, the king refused to believe him and himself climbed down into it.

However, what isn't there, isn't there, and though the king felt ashamed at having called together his guests for

nothing, he could not conceal from them that the little old man had vanished. He told them that he had got out of the cellar through a mouse-hole, and this they all believed and were very sorry indeed not to have seen him.

Many years passed, and the young prince grew to manhood. Once at dinner the talk turned on the little old man, and the prince confessed that he had sent his golden egg rolling into the cellar and that that was how the little old man had managed to escape.

The king was very angry. He would not listen to anyone, not even to the queen, and drove the prince out of the palace. But he ordered a general to go along with him for company, for he knew that it was easier for two people to roam the world and take care of themselves.

The prince and the general set off on their way, they walked and they walked and they came to a forest. It was very hot, and the prince felt thirsty, but where were they to get water? They walked on a little further, and there before them was a deep well.

Said the general:

"I'll let you down into the well on a rope if you like, and when you have drunk your fill, I'll pull you out again."

To this the prince agreed, and the general let him down into the well, but when he had drunk his fill, he did not pull him out as he had promised.

"I'll pull you out again on one condition – that from now on you will be the general and I will be the prince!" he called down to him.

What was the prince to do? If he refused, the general would leave him in the well. There was nothing for it but to agree.

The general pulled the prince out of the well and they went on again.

They came to the king of a strange kingdom and asked him if he would take them into his service. And all the time they did as they had agreed, the general calling himself a

prince and the prince calling himself a general.

The king invited the sham prince to live in the palace with him and he made the real one his chief groom. The grooms drove the horses to pasture, and the prince went with them, for it was his job to watch over them.

They came to the forest, the prince sat down on a rock, he thought of his sad plight, and the tears poured from his eyes. All of a sudden who should be there before him but the little old man whom he had let out of the cellar all those many years ago.

"Why so sad?" asked the little old man.

"There is no reason for me to be happy," said the prince. "My father drove me out of the palace for having let you escape, and now the general tells everyone that he is a prince, and I am forced to pasture horses."

"Don't you grieve, everything will turn out for the best," the little old man said. "Come with me to my eldest daughter's palace."

Now, this made the prince very curious.

"Who are you, then?" he asked.

"I am the King of the Mushrooms," said the little old man.

And he led the prince to his eldest daughter's palace. The palace and everything in it was made of copper, and it was truly a place to fill one with wonder! So happy did the prince feel there that he did not notice how the hours passed.

"It is time for you to leave us," said the King of the Mushrooms, "but, as is our custom, we will give you a farewell gift. Ho there! Bring in a copper horse!"

A copper horse was led in, and so spirited was he that it took four men to hold him.

"This is my present to you," said the King of the Mushrooms.

The prince was frightened.

"What will I do with him? Why, it takes four men to hold him!" he said.

"Here are four bottles of my magic potion. Drink it if you want to be strong!" said the King of the Mushrooms.

The prince drank the potion and at once felt so strong that he feared the copper horse no longer.

The King of the Mushrooms brought out a copper pipe.

"Here is a pipe for you," he said. "Take good care of it. If you lose it you will lose your horse as well. And now put on the copper armour that is under the saddle."

The prince put on the armour, sprang on the copper horse's back and rode off at a gallop.

On the following day he went to the forest again to graze the horses, and lo!–there was the King of the Mushrooms before him.

"You will have to pay my middle daughter a visit today," said he.

The prince sprang on the copper horse's back and made off at a gallop for the middle daughter's palace. Now, the middle daughter's palace was a silver one and everything in it was of silver. The time passed quickly, and the King of the Mushrooms had a silver horse brought in and given to the prince as a farewell gift. Eight men held the horse and it was almost more than they could do, so the prince felt that he could not cope with him.

The King of the Mushrooms told the prince to drink eight bottles of his magic potion and to take the silver armour from under the saddle. This the prince did, and he put on the armour which sparkled and shone so well was it furbished. And now the King of the Mushrooms brought out a silver pipe from his pocket.

"Take good care of it or you'll lose your horse," said he.

On the third day the prince went to visit the youngest daughter of the King of the Mushrooms, who lived in a palace of gold. There the King of the Mushrooms gave him a golden horse for a present, and as it took twelve men to hold him, the prince had to drink twelve bottles of the magic potion

before he was strong enough to cope with him. The King of the Mushrooms then gave him a golden pipe, and turning to his daughter, said:

"You too must give our guest something."

The youngest daughter brought a golden egg and gave it to the prince, who thanked her, got on his golden horse and galloped away.

He came back to his grooms and on the following day went to see the king in whose service he was. And as he came toward the palace, he met the king's youngest daughter who was weeping loudly.

"What has happened? Why are you crying?" the prince asked.

"How can I help it!" the princess said. "Tomorrow a dragon is going to crawl out of the sea and eat me up. If they don't give me to him he will raze the whole kingdom to the ground."

The prince took pity on the princess. On the following day, when the king's soldiers had lined up on the seashore and the princess arrived and stood waiting for the dragon, he went to the forest and blew upon his copper pipe. At once the copper horse appeared before him, and the prince put on his copper armour, sprang on the horse's back and made off at a gallop for the sea.

Meanwhile the dragon had crawled out of the sea on his four paws, and seeing the people gathered on the shore, gave out a bellow of laughter.

"Is there anyone among you brave enough to fight me?" he asked.

No one replied, and they all stood there in silence when who should come riding up to them on his copper horse but the prince!

"Who are you going to fight for?" asked the dragon.

"For the princess and for myself," the prince replied.

"How are you going to fight—on horseback or on foot?" asked the dragon again.

"On horseback," the prince said. "After all, you have four legs, too, like my horse."

The dragon decided to use cunning. He moved away at first, but then turned round very suddenly and came running back, thinking to swallow the prince together with his horse.

But this was not to be! The prince came at him, smote off his head with a single wave of his sword, threw his body into the sea and galloped off to the forest. But not a word did he say to his grooms, just as if nothing had happened.

On the following day the prince went to see the king again, and there, coming out of the palace and weeping loudly was the king's youngest daughter.

"What has happened?" asked the prince. "Why are you crying?"

"Tomorrow a six-headed dragon is going to crawl out of the sea and eat up my middle sister," the princess said. "How I wish I could find the brave man who saved me, for I know he would save my sister too!"

The prince went back to the forest, and on the following morning he blew upon his silver pipe, and at once the silver horse appeared before him. The prince put on his silver armour, sprang on the horse's back and galloped away. He rode up to the sea and waited for the six-headed dragon to appear.

All of a sudden the sea boiled up, and the six-headed dragon crawled out of the water and challenged the bravest among the men gathered there to battle. But they all ran away, and only the prince on his silver horse made straight for him.

"That's right, my son, come closer!" called the dragon. "It will be all the better for me, for I will eat up both you and your horse!"

And the dragon opened wide his jaws.

But the prince's sword flashed, and all of the dragon's six heads rolled down on to the sand like ordinary heads of cabbage.

The prince went back to the forest just as if nothing

had happened, let his silver horse go free and lay down for a sleep.

On the following day he went to see the king, and as he was coming toward the palace, he met the princess who was in tears again.

"What has happened?" asked the prince.

"Tomorrow a twelve-headed dragon is going to crawl out of the sea and eat up my eldest sister," the princess said. "How I wish I could find the brave man who saved me and my middle sister!"

The prince took pity on the princess, and when morning came he blew upon his golden pipe. The golden horse appeared before him, and the prince put on his golden armour, sprang on the horse's back and made off at a gallop for the sea.

The eldest princess was already on the shore waiting for the twelve-headed dragon, and the king, his men beside him, was there too, for he wanted to see how his daughter would fare.

After a time there came the most fearful noise, the sea began to seethe and boil, and the twelve-headed dragon thrust all his twelve heads out of the water and then crawled out on to the shore. The king's men ran away in fright, the king took to his heels, and only the prince on his golden horse made straight for the dragon. The dragon saw him and began to mock and jeer at him.

"That's right, my son, come closer!" he cried. "It will be all the better for me, for I will eat up both you and your horse!"

And thinking to swallow the prince, he opened wide his jaws. But the prince waved his sword, and six of the dragon's heads rolled to the ground like ordinary heads of cabbage. At this the dragon flew into a rage and began thrashing the prince and his horse with his tail. Smoke poured from the dragon's mouth and steam from his nostrils, and he was about to swallow the prince when the prince looked back and saw the

King of the Mushrooms standing there beside a large rock.

"Make haste and crack the golden egg!" said he to the prince.

The prince took the golden egg from his pocket and broke it in two, and at once a whole host of warriors poured out of it and attacked the dragon.

The dragon stood gaping at them, and the prince made good use of this and with one stroke of his sword smote off his six remaining heads. The dragon dropped dead, the prince took out the golden egg, broken though it was, and all the warriors poured back into it.

The dead dragon was left on the shore, and the prince galloped off to the forest and slept there for three days and three nights on end just as if nothing had happened. On the fourth day he felt someone shaking him, and when he opened his eyes, he saw the King of the Mushrooms standing beside him.

"Get up quickly and go to the king," said the King of the Mushrooms. "That knave of a general of yours is in the palace, demanding that the princess be given him in marriage. He says that it was he who killed the three dragons."

The prince jumped up and blew upon his copper pipe, the copper horse appeared, and the prince put on his copper armour and made off at a gallop for the palace. And he was there just in time to hear the general boasting about how he had vanquished the three dragons. The king's youngest daughter saw the prince and was overjoyed.

"Look, Father, there is the man who saved me!" she cried.

But the prince turned his copper horse round and rode off to the forest. There he blew upon his silver pipe, got off the copper horse and on the silver one and rode back again to the king's palace.

"Look, Father, there is the man who saved me!" the king's middle daughter cried.

But the prince turned round his horse and rode back to the forest. There he blew upon his golden pipe, and getting

off his silver horse and on the golden one, made for the king's palace again.

"Look, Father, there is the man who saved me!" the king's eldest daughter cried.

The prince was about to ride back to the forest again, but the king stopped him and said that he wanted to reward him for having saved his daughters.

"There is a prince from a faraway land here who says that he saved my daughters," said the king. "I don't know why they all insist that it was you who did it."

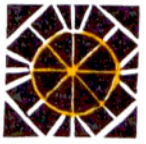
"The man who is passing himself off as a prince is only a general of mine," the prince said.

The king was much surprised.

"Then you are the prince?" said he. "Well, then, you shall be richly rewarded for your bravery. And you can marry one of my daughters besides. Just choose the one you like best."

But the prince rode off to the forest without waiting for his reward, and the king came back to the palace and drove out the general.

The prince now made straight for the golden palace where lived the youngest daughter of the King of the Mushrooms, she who had given him the golden egg. They were married then and there and lived together happily ever after. But as for the King of the Mushrooms, from that day on no one laid eyes on him again.



THE MAGIC MIRROR

Once upon a time there lived a king of great renown who was immensely rich. He had more money and gems than ten kings.

Because he was so rich the king took it into his head that he would never grow old. But this was not to be, for old age comes to all, rich or poor. The king was much put out by this. How could such a thing be? Was there no difference between him and the lowest beggar in his kingdom? He was as rich as ten kings, but his hair was turning white and thinning out all the same.

"That is not the way things should be," the king decided,

and he summoned his sons to his side.

Now, he had three sons but he only summoned the two older ones, for his youngest son was a simple soul who was mocked at by his brothers. But so good-natured was he that he never took offence at this.

The two sons came at his bidding, and the king said to them:

"When I was a child I heard that there was a magic mirror somewhere on earth in which one had only to look to become young again. I will give half my kingdom to the one who brings me this mirror. Find it for me, and you will make me happy and yourselves, too. Take whatever you need and prepare to set off at once."

The sons were overjoyed and asked the king to give them a coach and six horses and also a sackful of gold.

The king gave them all they asked for, and the sons harnessed the horses and put the sack of gold in the coach. Then, getting into the coach, they called the coachman, and set off on their journey.

The youngest son learned of this and he came to his father and asked to be sent in search of the magic mirror, too.

But the king only laughed at him.

"Where would a fool like you go?" he said. "Your foolishness will be the death of you. Better go and take a walk, your brothers will do well enough without you."

But the fool was very hurt at being thought too young and foolish to join his brothers and would not be put off.

"Oh, very well!" said the king at last. "Let it be as you ask. Only don't think that I'll trust you with six horses and a sack of gold, you'll have to do without them. And remember: if you get into trouble you'll have only yourself to blame."

But the fool was very pleased, for it was enough for him that he had been allowed to go.

He counted his money and found that he only had ten thalers, not enough to buy a good horse. But he had to make

the best of it, so he bought himself an old, run-down nag, got on its back and set out from home.

The nag dragged slowly along, but this did not trouble the fool who told himself that he was on his way which was all that mattered.

It was evening when he rode up to a large inn A coach with six horses harnessed to it stood at the door.

"This means my brothers are here!" he said to himself. "I'll go in and find them and perhaps we can travel together."

He tethered his nag and came into the inn, but when his brothers saw him they burst out laughing.

"What are you doing here, fool?" they asked.

"I want to find the magic mirror," said the fool. "Take me with you and we'll all profit by it."

"Go away, you fool! If anything happens to you we'll be the ones to answer for it."

Now, this made the fool very unhappy. He left the inn, got on the nag again and rode on.

And the two older brothers stayed where they were and would go no further in search of the mirror.

"The wolves will eat up the fool together with his nag!" they said, laughing. "A fine mirror he'll get then."

On and on rode the fool and at last he came to a great, leafy forest. He was about to circle it when he saw a narrow little path that led into it. This he decided to follow, for, thought he, it's in a forest that one always finds things.

A whole day passed, and the fool never got off his horse. At last, feeling bored, he stopped, broke a branch off a tree and cut out a little pipe. After that he rode on again.

A day went by, and another, and on the third day he reached a small glade where, standing beneath a huge oak-tree, was a poor little hut.

He rode up closer and was about to enter the hut when a little old woman stepped out on to the porch.

"Well, well, someone to see me at last!" she said. "I saw

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the forest die and rot away and another grow up in its place, so long have I been here, but not once in all that time did I see a living soul. What brings you here?"

"I am looking for a mirror, Grandma," the fool said. "Not an ordinary one, mind, but a magic one in which one has only to look to become young again. My father does not want to grow old, so he sent me in search of it. Do you know where it can be found, Grandma?"

"No, my son, I don't, this is the first I hear of such a mirror. But I have a sister who is older than I, and she may know something about it. Why don't you go to see her? It will take you three days to get to her house."

The fool thanked her and rode on and in three days' time he came to the house of the old woman's elder sister.

"What brings you here?" asked she in surprise.

The fool told her about the mirror and asked where it was to be found.

"That I can't tell you," said she, "although I think I heard about it years ago, when I was young. But perhaps our eldest sister knows something about it, she is the wisest of the three of us. Why don't you go to see her? It will take you three days to get to her house."

The fool thanked her and rode on, and in three days' time he came to the house of the eldest sister who was even more surprised to see him than the other two had been.

"What brings you here?" she asked.

The fool told her about the mirror and asked where it was to be found.

"That I can't tell you," said the eldest sister. "I heard something about it, but where it is to be found I don't know. But perhaps one of my servants knows. You'd better get off your horse and come into the house."

The fool came into the house, and the old woman took a long, carved whistle from a shelf and went out on to the porch with it. She blew upon it, and lo!–the whole forest came alive and rustled as if the grass were being trod by

many feet. The fool looked out of the window and saw that all the beasts of the forest had gathered by the house.

The old woman talked to them and then came back into the house again.

"No, these servants of mine know nothing about the mirror," she said. "I'll call my other servants – perhaps they have heard something about it."

And she took another carved whistle from the shelf, and going out on to the porch again, blew upon it even harder than she had upon the first one.

And again a rustling began in the forest – only it was not the grass that rustled this time but the tree branches which made a sound like the arms of many windmills whirling round and round. The fool looked out of the window and saw that great numbers of birds had flocked to the house.

The old woman talked to them and came back into the house again.

"These servants of mine know no more about the mirror than the others," said she. "But I have one other servant, the wisest of them all, and if he has not heard about it, then it means that there is no such thing."

And the old woman took a carved whistle from the shelf and led the way to the porch.

"You can hear for yourself what the wisest of my servants has to say," she said. And she blew upon her whistle so hard that the fool was almost deafened.

And now there came a rumbling sound, and so loud was it that it seemed as if a storm had broken in the forest.

A large two-headed hawk came down on to the glade and perched on a stone.

"What is it the Mother of the Forest wishes?" asked he.

"I wish to know where the magic mirror is to be found," said the old woman.

"I can tell you where," the hawk replied, "but it won't do you any good, for no man can ever hope to get it. It is hidden in the chamber of a princess who lives on an island

in the middle of the sea, and so high are the rocks that surround the island that no ship can put in to shore."

"What a man cannot do, you can," said the old woman. "Let this young man climb on your back and carry him to the island!"

The hawk spread out his wings, the fool got on his back and up they soared to the sky.

For nine days and nine nights they flew, and it was on the tenth day that they reached the island in the middle of the sea.

"Wait till night comes and then go into the palace and steal the mirror from the princess," said the hawk. "She keeps it under her pillow, but you mustn't be afraid of waking her. She sleeps so soundly that she would not awake even if you were to ride into her chamber on horseback. Just seize the mirror and run for it! And mind, don't stay in the palace longer than you must or it'll be the end of us."

And having said this, the hawk plucked out two feathers from his tail.

"When you reach the gate you will see two bears," he went on. "Throw a feather to each, and you'll be able to go past them."

The fool took the feathers and made for the palace. He came to the gate, and the two bears who guarded it reared up on their hind legs when they saw him. But the fool threw a feather to each of them, and they snatched them up and fell asleep.

The fool now went into the palace, and though everyone in it slept, all the rooms were brightly lit and it did not take him long to find the princess. He took the magic mirror from under her pillow, thrust it in his bosom and was about to slip out when his eyes fell on a table set with food and drink.

"There's time enough," thought he. "I'll have a bite before I leave here."

And he set to and began to eat with great gusto.

When he had had enough and could eat and drink no more he said to himself:

"I wonder what the princess is like. I think I'd better take a look and see!"

He came up to the bed, and so lovely was the princess that he could not get his fill of gazing at her! And on her finger there shone, bright as the sun, a most beautiful ring!

The fool could not stop himself, he eased off the ring, and this done, made off at a run for the gate.

Now, the hawk had been kept waiting for many hours, and so angry was he that he seized the fool by his coat and soared up into the air with him. The bears, who had wakened, rushed growling at them, but the two were high overhead by then and out of their reach.

They flew over the sea, but the hawk dropped down after a time and dipped the fool in the water to his knees.

By and by he dropped down a second time and dipped the fool in the water to his chest. Some time passed, and he dropped down a third time and dipped the fool in the water to his neck. The fool was terrified and he yelled and screamed.

"What did you dip me in the sea like that for, hawk? Why, my heart was in my mouth I was so frightened," he said.

"Let it be a lesson to you," said the hawk. "Now you'll know what I went through waiting by the gate while you dawdled in the palace. You were frightened when I dipped you in the water to your knees; well, so was I when you stepped into the princess's chamber and the bears lifted their heads. You were frightened when I dipped you in the water to your chest; well, so was I when you started eating and the bears sat up. You were frightened when I dipped you in the water to your neck; well, so was I when you took the ring off the princess's finger and the bears reared up on their hind legs. Why, had the princess wakened, they'd have torn me to pieces! And don't think you'd have escaped alive, either!"

"God be thanked she did not wake!" the fool thought.

They came to the house of the eldest sister, and when she saw the mirror, she said:

"I have no use for it, I'm much too old for it to do me any good, but you may have need of these."

And she gave the fool three switches.

"Just wave these switches," said she, "and your every wish will come true."

The fool thanked her, and getting on his nag's back, rode away.

He came to the house of the middle sister and showed her the mirror.

"I have no use for it, I'm much too old for it to do me any good," said the old woman, "but you may have need of this."

And she gave the fool a little bag.

"Whenever you are hungry and have nothing to eat, undo this bag," she said, "and loaves of bread will come pouring out of it."

The fool thanked her, said goodbye and rode on.

He came to the house of the youngest sister and showed her the mirror.

"I have no use for it, I'm much too old for it to do me any good," said she, "but you may have need of these."

And she gave him a pair of scissors.

"If your clothes wear out and you have need of new ones, just click these scissors," she said.

The fool thanked her, said goodbye and rode on.

He rode up to the selfsame inn and saw that his brothers' coach was still standing in front of it.

"My brothers must be there still," said he to himself and he went into the inn.

"Well, have you found the mirror?" his brothers asked.

"Yes, I have!" the fool replied.

The brothers then began plying him with food and drink, and when he was quite drunk, they said:

"Come, fool, show us the mirror! What if it isn't a magic mirror at all?"

"Oh, yes it is!" said the fool, and he brought out the mirror. The brothers looked in it and saw that it was indeed a magic mirror.

"A treasure if ever there was one!" they said. "You don't need it, we'll take it for ourselves."

And taking the mirror, they made for the door.

"Don't you tell on us or we'll give you a drubbing you won't forget!" said they.

They went home and showed the mirror to their father, and the moment he looked in it he became young again.

"What fine, clever fellows you are!" he said. "You shall have half my kingdom in reward."

But no sooner had he said this than there was the fool at the door.

"It was I who found the mirror," said he, and the tears poured from his eyes. "My brothers took it away from me! They stayed at the inn all the time and never went anywhere at all."

"What a fool you are!" said his father.

"A fool like that should not be allowed to live!" said the two older brothers. "Have him put to death, Father!"

The fool tried to explain how he had found the mirror and how he had flown on the hawk's back, but this only made the king angrier than ever.

"Take him to the seashore," said he to his older sons, "put him in a boat with no oars in it and push the boat into the sea."

The brothers seized the fool, put him in a boat with no oars in it and pushed it into the sea.

"The hawk will help you!" they said, laughing.

The wind sent the boat out into the open sea where it was tossed about by the waves and then flung out by them on to a rocky shore. The fool looked round him and saw that he was on an island in the middle of the sea.

"My end has come," thought he. "To find myself on a desert island, of all places! I'd better try to pull the boat out on to the shore."

He took hold of the boat but found that he could not move it, for something that lay in his bosom was in his way.

He thrust his hand in his shirt, and lo!–there were the three switches that the eldest of the three old women had given him.

"I forgot all about the things the old women gave me!" he thought. "Now we'll see if they are truly magic things."

He took the switches, waved them once and said:

"Let a town rise up here and let there be many people in it!"

And no sooner were the words out of his mouth than a town rose up from out of the ground and, as if out of thin air, many, many people appeared, naked as the day they were born.

The fool brought out his scissors, clicked them once and then again and said:

"Come, now, scissors, dress the townsfolk!"

And at once many carts loaded to the top with clothing drove up. All the townsfolk had to do was to come up and dress themselves!

But there was nothing for them to eat, so the fool got out his bag and untied it, and lo and behold!–loaves of bread came pouring out of it, enough for all!

After this the fool was made king of the island, and all his subjects were well pleased with him, for thanks to the switches, the scissors and the bag they never lacked for anything.

One fine day the young king was out on the seashore taking a walk when he saw a ship far out at sea.

"Quick, now, where is my boat?" he asked.

A boat was brought to him, and he got into it and rowed up to the ship. There was a maid on board, and he saw that it was none other but the princess from whom he had

stolen the ring and the mirror. Greeting her warmly, he invited her to visit his kingdom.

"Thank you, but I can't leave this ship," the princess said. "My magic mirror was stolen from me and so was my ring, and I have been told that I am to marry him who stole them. Now, what if he should turn out to be someone very old or wicked? With the help of my magic mirror he might live for another hundred years, and, if so, he'll never rest till he finds me. But I'm sure he'd never think of looking for me at sea, so that's why I'll never go ashore but stay where I am."

At this the king slipped the princess's ring off his finger and gave it to her, and oh, how glad the princess was that her husband-to-be was not old or wicked but young and handsome and a king besides!

They rowed back to shore together and were greeted joyously by all who saw them.

Soon after this they were married, and the feasting and merrymaking went on for many, many months.

And as for the magic mirror, it was lost and has not been found to this day.

SMUDGEFACE

There was once a man who had three sons, two of them clever young men and the third, a fool. The father made much of his two elder sons but gave not a pin for his youngest one. The elder brothers, too, mocked at the fool and called him Smudgeface if they called him anything.

So unbearable was life for him at home that poor Smudgeface made up his mind to seek his fortune elsewhere. He thought and he thought where to go and at last decided to make for the king's own city.

On his way there, Smudgeface heard that in the king's forest there lived two fierce beasts, an aurochs and a boar,

who attacked all and sundry, and that this troubled the king so much that he had sent the bravest of his men to the forest to try and kill them. But since none had been able to do so, the king had promised that he would give his daughter in marriage to whoever did away with them. The bravest of the brave and the strongest of the strong had tried to it but failed and were glad to get out of the forest alive.

The king was now at a loss as to what was to be done.

"Why shouldn't I try my luck!" said Smudgeface to himself. "I might get the better of them."

And he came to the palace and said that he would do away with the aurochs and the boar.

"Just look at him!" the king's servants said. "Why, we had the strongest and bravest of young men here and none of them could do anything, so what can this fool do! He'll only make a laughing-stock of himself, and serve him right, too!"

They would have liked to drive Smudgeface out of the palace then and there but dared not, for the king had said that anyone who wished could try his luck and none was to be kept from doing so.

Smudgeface now announced that he would fight the aurochs first, and the whole town, including the king himself, came running to watch the combat.

Choosing a place near the church where grew age-old oak-trees, Smudgeface leaned against one of them and waited.

After a time out sprang the aurochs from the forest and came at him with a roar, but Smudgeface pretended not to see him, and it was only when he was very close that he leapt aside. The aurochs lunged at him but missed, his sharp horns piercing the trunk of the tree and sticking in it, and toss and shake his head as he would he could not pull them out again. Smudgeface now rushed at the aurochs and with one wave of his swordcut off his head.

Seeing the beast dead, the townsfolk cheered and the king himself clapped his hands for joy.

But even this was not enough for the king's servants.

"The aurochs is nothing!" they cried. "Let the fool try to kill the boar. The boar won't stick his tusks in a tree, you may be sure!"

"Let's wait and see!" said Smudgeface.

He came into the church, and locking all the doors save one, stood there and waited.

The boar now came running, and in his haste he did not notice Smudgeface. All round the church he ran, and only then, seeing him standing in the door, did he rush at him. But Smudgeface leapt aside, and the boar tore past him into the church. Smudgeface then slammed the door shut behind him, and the boar was trapped inside.

The townsfolk were filled with wonder to see how clever Smudgeface was, and even the king himself was full of praise for him.

"Now, there's a clever lad!" said he. "He's managed to trap the boar. Let's see if he can do away with him."

This made Smudgeface laugh. He called to the boar and teased him, and the boar roared and flung about the church in a rage. By and by he found his way to the belfry, whose door Smudgeface had left ajar on purpose to lure him there, and stood looking down on the people below. Smudgeface now began teasing him harder than ever, and the boar lunged at him, and missing his footing, fell from the belfry. He hit the soft earth below, plunged into it up to his belly and could not so much as stir, and Smudgeface brought out his sword and cut off his head.

The people rejoiced to see the fearful beast dead, and the king clapped his hands in delight.

"Well, will you let me have your daughter in marriage?" Smudgeface asked, coming up to him.

"I suppose I must, for a promise is a promise," said the king.

So Smudgeface and the king's daughter were married, and a right fine wedding was theirs. So hard did everyone dance

that the floor boards bent, the earth rocked and shook and the stars blinked in the sky. A hundred bulls and a thousand hogs were roasted, and the tables were set out in the palace courtyard that all might eat and drink at the king's expense. Only after the new moon appeared in the sky for a second time did the guests begin to take their leave.

Smudgeface settled in the palace and was as happy as could be. The princess, his wife, was so sweet and pretty that none could compare with her, and the servants attended to his every need just as if he were the king himself.

But the king did not like his sons-in-law to twiddle their thumbs and fritter away their time, so he said to Smudgeface:

"There is a white bird, a magic one, living in my forest. I want it to be caught. Go with my other sons-in-law and hunt for it."

Smudgeface yawned.

"Oh, all right, I'll go if you say so!" said he.

The king's three other sons-in-law rose with the first gleam of dawn and went off to the forest to hunt for the bird, but Smudgeface slept on as though he had not a care in the world. It was midday when his wife woke him.

"Come, now, are you ever going to get up?" she said. "My sisters' husbands have been in the forest for a long time now, they may even have caught the bird while you lie here and sleep."

"What is to be will be," said Smudgeface in reply, yawning.

But he got up all the same, and taking some food with him, went to the forest. He walked about for a long time, and never a bird did he see, but after a time, coming toward him, he met an old man.

"Give me something to eat, my lad," the old man said. "I haven't had anything at all for three days."

Now, Smudgeface was never one to be stingy, so he gave his bag of food to the old man and said:

"Here, Grandpa, eat your fill and don't be cross with me, I have nothing better to offer you."

The old man took the bag and went at the food with great gusto.

"Were you setting out for a distant place, then, that you took some food with you?" he asked.

"I am here to try and catch the white bird," Smudgeface said, "for so the king ordered me and his other sons-in-law to do. But since they set out before dawn and have surely caught it by now, I am simply wasting my time."

"Do not grieve, for no one can catch this bird without my help," said the old man. "Gather the bread-crumbs I let fall and scatter them in the glade yonder, and many birds will come flying up to peck them. The one the king wants will be among them, and you won't have much trouble catching it. All you have to do is pounce on it and seize it. And if ever you need my help again, come here and call three times 'I am here, Grandpa!' and I'll hear you and come."

Smudgeface thanked the old man for his counsel and did just as he said. He caught the white bird, and coming out on to the road along which the king's other sons-in-law were to return home, sat down to wait.

He waited a long time, nibbling at what was left of the food, and still they did not come.

It was evening when he saw them at last, coming out of the forest with hanging heads.

Seeing Smudgeface sitting there, they began to chide and to scold him.

"Just look at that loafer!" they cried. "Dozing by the wayside while we do all the work."

"I am not the fool you think me," Smudgeface said. "Why shouldn't I rest now that I've caught the bird!"

"Stop talking nonsense!" the other sons-in-law cried.

"If you don't believe me, look for yourselves!"

And with these words Smudgeface untied his bag and showed them the bird.

"Who would have thought it!" said they, amazed, and the eldest of them asked:

"What are you going to do with the bird now that you have it? Perhaps you'll sell it to us? We'll pay you well for it."

"I will if you do."

"How much do you want for it?"

"A piece of your little finger no bigger than an oat grain."

The eldest of the sons-in-law thought this over.

"Of course, chopping off a piece of my finger will hurt," said he to himself, "but still, I think I'll let the fool have it. For then I'll at least get the bird and the king will reward me handsomely."

He chopped off a piece of his little finger and gave it to Smudgeface, and Smudgeface slipped it in his pocket and then gave him the bird. And the eldest of the sons-in-law took the bird to the king who rewarded him richly for it.

On the following day the king summoned his sons-in-law again.

"I am pleased that you've managed to catch the white bird," said he. "But only him will I think truly brave and reward royally who catches and brings me the magic horse. Many have tried to do it but none succeeded."

On the next day the three older sons-in-law rose with the first gleam of dawn and set out for the forest, and only Smudgeface snored on as if trying to catch the horse had nothing to do with him.

It was his wife who woke him.

"Get up and go to the forest!" she cried. "I don't want you to return empty-handed again."

Off went Smudgeface to the forest, and he did not forget to take a bag of food with him.

He came to the place where he had met the old man and called out three times: "I am here, Grandpa!" And no sooner

were the words out of his mouth than there stood the old man before him.

"Are you here to try and catch something again?" he asked.

"The king has ordered the magic horse to be caught. Do please help me!" Smudgeface said.

"That's easy! Here is a bridle for you. Go to the edge of the forest, and when some horses come to graze there, put it on the one that comes last, for that is the one the king wants."

Smudgeface did as the old man said. No sooner had he put the bridle on it than—o wonder of wonders!—the horse turned into a beautiful stallion. All one had to do was jump on his back and ride away!

And that was just what Smudgeface did. He galloped to the place where he had met the other sons-in-law the night before, and tying the horse to a tree, brought out some food and began to eat.

By and by the three sons-in-law came out of the forest.

"What sort of man are you!" they said. "You never do a stroke of work, all you do is eat. Look at us! We've been wandering in the forest the whole day long."

"I'll come with you, just wait here a minute," Smudgeface said.

He ran into the forest, untied the stallion, mounted him and came galloping back.

The sons-in-law were thunderstruck.

"Where did you catch him?" they asked.

"He who looks hard enough is sure to find what he is looking for," Smudgeface said.

"Is he? We looked for the horse but never found him."

"You didn't look hard enough."

The three sons-in-law began pleading with Smudgeface to sell them the horse.

"How much do you want for him?" they asked.

"Not much. All I want is the middle son-in-law's signet ring."

"What!" the middle son-in-law cried. He offered Smudgeface a large sum of money, but Smudgeface refused to take it and kept saying that all he wanted was the ring.

The middle son-in-law gave it him, and getting the horse in return, led him to the king who rewarded him royally.

A day passed, and the king said to his sons-in-law:

"There is a huge bear living in the forest who is a menace to all. Prove to me that you are indeed the brave lads I think you and kill the bear, and you will get a sack of gold."

Morning came, the three sons-in-law set out for the forest, but Smudgeface did not join them and slept on.

It was his wife again who woke him and sent him after them in search of the bear.

Smudgeface came into the forest and called out three times "I am here, Grandpa!"—and there was the old man before him.

"Have you come to kill the bear?" he asked.

"So I have," Smudgeface said. "But how am I to do it?"

"I'll tell you how. It's still early, the bear is wandering about in the forest and is hard to find. Wait till noon when he wanders into a thicket and settles down for a rest, creep up close to him and strike him on the muzzle with a stake. The blow will finish him. When you see that he has breathed his last, skin him and take the skin to the king."

Smudgeface did as the old man said. He found the bear, killed and skinned him and then came out on to the road to wait for the other sons-in-law. He sat down by the wayside and brought out some food, and he was still eating when they appeared. They came up close, stood round him and laughed.

"Have you killed the bear that you've worked up such an appetite?" they asked.

"Of course I have!" Smudgeface said. And he brought out the bearskin to prove it, for they would not believe him otherwise.

The sons-in-law began to bargain with him.

"Sell us the bearskin," said they.

"I don't mind."

"How much do you want for it?"

"I want no money. All I want is for the youngest of you to let me pierce his ear."

The youngest of the three sons-in-law made a face.

"A silly jest!" he said. "What good will it do you if I have a hole in my ear. Take some money, and let's have no more talk."

But Smudgeface would not hear of it.

"It's up to you!" he said. "The bearskin is mine, and the ear is yours."

There was nothing to be done, and as the youngest of the sons-in-law was very eager to have the bearskin, he let his ear be pierced. In return, he got the bearskin and took it to the king who gave him a sack of gold in reward.

Soon after that the king held a great feast to which he invited all his sons-in-law except Smudgeface.

"Why should I invite him!" he said. "He has done nothing to deserve it."

The other sons-in-law went to the feast, and Smudgeface made for the forest where he met the old man again.

"Why do you frown, my son? Has anything happened to anger you?" he asked.

"I am angry at my own self," said Smudgeface. "Why did I have to catch the bird, the horse and the bear only to give them up to the other sons-in-law! It was very foolish of me. Now the king thinks that they are heroes and I am a good-for-nothing. Why, he did not even invite me to the feast!"

"Don't you grieve," the old man said. "Here is a pea for you. Eat it, and you'll turn into whoever you choose and will be able to go wherever you please."

Smudgeface thanked the old man and went home. He swallowed the pea, and turning into a flea, slipped into the palace. There he saw the three sons-in-law and heard them boasting of their prowess, the youngest of them saying that he had

killed the bear, the middle one, that he had caught the magic horse, and the oldest, that he had snared the white bird.

Smudgeface went to his chamber, got back his proper shape, and putting on his finest clothes, returned to the palace.

Seeing him, the three sons-in-law stepped back in surprise.

"Never in my life have I seen such braggarts," Smudgeface said. "It was I and not they who caught the bird and the horse and killed the bear."

At this the sons-in-law raised a great hullabaloo, shouting, all three of them together:

"Lies! Lies! Lies!"

And they called their servants and ordered them to throw Smudgeface in a dungeon.

But Smudgeface reached into his pocket and brought out the piece of finger and the signet-ring.

"This is what I got from these rogues in return for the bird and the horse," said he. "And as for the bearskin, the youngest of them agreed to let me pierce his ear if I gave it to him."

Seeing that they were shown up for what they were, the three sons-in-law left the palace, and the feasters surrounded Smudgeface and began praising him. And as for the king, he was filled with such respect for him that he made him his heir.

At the king's death Smudgeface became king in his stead, and if he isn't dead he must be reigning over the kingdom still.

THE WISE COUNSELLOR

One day, long, long ago, a poor youth was walking along a road. Feeling tired, he sat down on the grass by a large stone, ate some of the food he had with him, and stretching himself out on the ground, fell asleep.

In his sleep he seemed to hear a squeaky little voice piping something in his ear. But the piping did not stop when he woke. By the sound of it he judged that it came either from under the stone or from somewhere within it.

The youth put his ear to the stone and found that that was where the voice was indeed coming from! He listened carefully and was gradually able to make out the words:

"O good and kind youth! Please deliver me from my long and trying captivity! For seven hundred years have I been suffering the most terrible torture, but my captors won't let me die. You were born at sunrise on Easter day, therefore you alone can save me."

"I don't know if it is in my power to do so," said the youth. "Tell me how you have come to be where you are and what I must do in order to rescue you."

Said the squeaky little voice:

"First you must find a rowan-tree that grows on the border of three farms and cut off a piece of its branch a finger thick and an inch long. After that you must take several bunches of savory and of caraway, burn them and the rowan branch together, and walking round the stone nine times, with your face to the sun, let the smoke curl over the whole of it. Only then will the gate of my prison open and I will see the sun again and feel the breath of the wind. If you save me my gratitude will know no bounds, I will make you rich and famous."

The youth thought this over.

"To help someone in trouble is every man's duty," he said. "Although I don't yet know whether you are a good or an evil spirit, I will try to do what I can for you. But first you must swear that, once you are free, you will do no one any harm."

To this the captive agreed, vowing on his honour to keep his word.

The youth then went off to the forest in search of the rowan-tree and the herbs. Luckily, he knew of a place nearby where a rowan-tree grew on the border of three farms, but it took him much longer to find the herbs and he was only back with them on the following day.

It was after sunset of that day that he set about his task, going round the stone nine times, with his face to the sun, and being careful to let the smoke curl over its whole surface.

He was nearly done when there came the most terrible noise, it was as if the earth itself were being rent asunder. The same instant the huge stone moved from its place and rose up high in the air, and a little old man sprang from under it and rushed away. Then the stone crashed down again, spraying everything around it with dust.

The little old man now came running back. He threw his arms round the youth and tried to kiss his hands and feet. Then the two of them dropped down on the grass beside the stone, and the little old man told the youth the following story:

"I was once a magician and a famous one who helped many and was richly rewarded for it. I healed the sick, both men and animals, and broke the evil spells cast over people by witches and sorcerers who feared me because I was stronger than they. Many a time did they try to think of ways of doing away with me, but by means of the secret knowledge that I possessed I was able to upset their wily plans and they could do me no harm.

"At last they got together a large sum of money and sent a messenger with it to a sorcerer who lived in a northern land, calling on him to help them. It was he who finally got the better of me, though not so much by wisdom as by cunning. He stole my tools of magic and hid me away under the stone to languish there till the day when a man born at sunrise on Easter day should come and free me. For seven hundred years I waited for that happy moment, and now here I am, free! To the end of my days I will serve you, giving all of my strength to making you happy and to raising you to the greatest heights a mortal can reach on earth. When I have done this, I will ask you to help me again in order that I may square accounts with my enemies. Until then I will hide myself from all eyes. By means of magic I can take any shape I please. I can, for instance, turn myself into a flea and shelter in your pocket. But if ever you need my help I will scramble out of it,

jump behind your ear and tell you what to do. I won't want any food, for I have done without all the seven hundred years I spent under the stone, and fresh air and sunshine are just what I need. And now let us sleep, for in the morning we will set out together to seek our fortune."

The little old man had now come to the end of his story, and the youth ate and lay down for a sleep.

On the following morning he rose when the sun was high in the sky and looked round him, but the little old man was nowhere to be seen, and he was not sure whether he had really seen him or whether it had all been a dream.

He had his breakfast and was about to start on his way again when three wayfarers appeared on the road. Judging by their clothes and the leather bags strapped to their backs, they were artisans. Just then the youth felt a tickling behind his ear, and a thin little voice piped:

"Tell the three wayfarers to stop and rest and then ask them where they are bound."

The youth now saw that his adventure of the night before had not been a dream.

He came up to the three men and asked them to sit down, saying that after they had rested he would join them. The three, who turned out to be apprentices, as he had thought, told him that only several days before the king had lost his only daughter. The princess had drowned, and though the river where she had been bathing was not deep, her body had not been found.

Suddenly the youth heard the little old man perching behind his ear whisper:

"If you want to make your fortune, go with these men."

The youth did as the little old man said, and as soon as the three apprentices had rested, went with them.

The road soon led them into a pine forest where, lying by the wayside, was an old knapsack.

"Take that old knapsack, it might come in handy," the little old man whispered.

The youth doubted that anything so old and worn could be of any possible use, but he picked up the knapsack and hung it on his back, saying with a laugh:

"A man must not disdain that which he finds lying in the road. Who knows but that this old knapsack may be of use to us!"

His companions scoffed at this but said:

"Take it if you want. An empty knapsack is not so heavy that it will weigh down your shoulders."

They soon changed their tune, however, for they saw that the knapsack was no ordinary knapsack but a magic one.

Walking in the hot midday sun had wearied them, and seating themselves in the shade of a tree, they were about to refresh themselves with the little they had with them, when the little old man hiding behind the youth's ear whispered:

"Order the knapsack to bring you food!"

The youth, who thought this a jest but decided that it might amuse his companions, took the knapsack off his back, put it on the grass in front of him, rapped it with a stick and said:

"Please, knapsack, bring us some food!"

At this something quite unheard-of happened. There before them, where the knapsack had just been, now stood a table spread with a white cloth and stacked with food and drink. The many huge platters were heaped with roast pork, sausages and pies, the four bowls were filled with a thick broth, and a spoon lay beside each. And there was beer, wine and mead in the jugs, enough for all!

The four young men set to in earnest. It was as if they were at a wedding feast, for never in their lives had they eaten anything so good!

When they had had their fill, the table vanished as suddenly as it had appeared and in its place lay the old knapsack again.

The three apprentices had jeered at the youth for having taken it with him, but now they vied with each other for

the right to carry it. Seeing that they were about to quarrel, the youth said:

"I found it, so it's mine by rights."

After that there was nothing more to be said, but they could not let such a treasure dangle on his back, unprotected, so one of them brought out from his bag a piece of sacking, a needle and some thread and made a cover for it.

The travellers rested and then went on. A full stomach and a hopeful heart are the best of companions, and they walked along singing and joking.

Evening came, they sheltered under a bush, and the knapsack fed them as well as it had at midday. Before going to bed they thought long about how to keep it from being stolen and decided that they would all rest their heads on it. And as if this were not enough, the youth tied it to one end of his belt and his left hand to the other end, so that none might pull at the knapsack without his feeling it. But though better ways of keeping the knapsack safe could hardly be found, the four young men slept fitfully, and whenever they woke, which was often, would grope for it to make sure it was still there. In the morning the knapsack gave them breakfast, and so it went for a week by which time they had arrived at the king's city.

Now the little old man who was still sitting behind the youth's ear, told him that the princess had not been drowned at all but dragged into a whirlpool by a wicked mermaid, and he promised to show him the way to the place where she was being held captive. He also told him that he was to present himself to the king and announce that he would go in search of the princess.

This the youth did, and the king, who had lost all hope of ever seeing his daughter again, gladly agreed to it, saying that he would do everything he asked him to.

The youth left the palace, and the little old man hiding behind his ear piped:

"You must catch three crayfish, they will show you the way."

And the youth did not need to be told twice and did as the little old man said.

On the following day the townsfolk flocked to the river bank where he was to begin his search for the princess. The king came, too, for he wanted to see for himself what the youth would do, and he ordered the princess's maidservants, who had been with her, to point out the spot where they had seen her last. This the maidservants did, and it now became clear to all that the river having a level bottom and a weak current and being no more than three feet deep, no one could drown there. True, there was a deep hole farther downstream, but how could the princess have got there! Surely a spell had been put upon her.

"Let one of the crayfish down into the water and see where it crawls," the little old man piped in the youth's ear.

The youth did as he said. He put his hand in the water as if wanting to measure the river's depth, and let out one of the crayfish.

The crayfish crawled alongside the shore and vanished under a cliff.

When the second and the third crayfish had followed it and vanished under the same cliff, the little old man bent over the youth's ear.

"Now that we know where to go there is no time to be lost," he said. "Strike the ground three times with the heel of your left foot and dive into the river. Once we're underwater, I'll know where to go."

The youth did as he was told. He struck the ground three times with his foot and dived into the river. The water rippled and foamed, and the lookers-on waited to see what would happen next.

Reaching the spot underwater directly beneath the cliff, the youth saw an opening that led into a cave. The

opening was narrow, and to squeeze in was almost more than a man could do.

"Into the cave with you!" the little old man cried.

The youth crawled in with some difficulty, but as he pushed on the walls fell back and he was soon able to stand up.

After a while a faint light showed ahead, and the youth stepped out of the cave to see a broad grass-grown valley spreading before him with a tall house of blue stone rising in the distance.

Said the little old man:

"Listen carefully to all I'm going to say and do just as I tell you, for you will never rescue the princess otherwise. She is being held captive by a mermaid in that blue house yonder, and two bears stand guard by the gate day and night to keep all and sundry from getting in or out. As soon as we come near, order your knapsack to turn into a beehive, and when it does, throw it to them. After that it will be easy to slip into the house. Once we are inside, I'll tell you what to do next."

The youth came up to the gate, and when he caught sight of the bears, his heart was in his heels. But he took the knapsack off his back and ordered it to turn into a beehive. The hive was full of honey and so heavy that he could not lift it, but the bears, lured by the smell, threw the gate wide open and rushed out. They never saw the youth, who slipped into the yard behind their backs and made his way into the house.

Said the little old man:

"There are two doors here, one on your left and one on your right. The one on the left has a golden key in it and the one on the right, a silver one. First, you must lock the door with the golden key, so the mermaid will not be able to get out, and then unlock the door with the silver key and let out the princess."

The youth did as he said. He locked the door with the

golden key, and unheedful of the roar that came from the room and made the walls shake, hurried to the door with the silver key. Unlocking it, he saw the princess, who sat on a couch, a sorrowful look on her face. She was frightened at first, but when the youth told her that he was there to free her she smiled happily.

"There is no time to be lost," the youth said. "We must get out of here before the bears have eaten all of the honey."

And taking the princess by the hand, he led her to the door. The bears, who were still busy with the hive which they had rolled out into the yard, paid them no heed, and the runaways tiptoed past them and ran out through the gate.

"Tell the knapsack to come back to you!" the little old man piped in the youth's ear.

"Knapsack, knapsack, come back to me!" the youth cried.

And the same instant there was the knapsack on his back again!

They came to the cave, and the youth said to the princess:

"The cave is dark and narrow, but don't be afraid, for we will be out of it in a little while. As soon as we are in the water, shut your eyes and don't open them until I have carried you out on to the bank."

The underground passage was now, for some reason, far wider than it had been before, and the runaways made their way through it easily. They got to the river, and the youth lifted the princess and carried her out on to the bank.

Most of the people had gone home, but not the king and his courtiers who still sat there talking about the lost princess when she appeared before them.

The king's happiness knew no bounds. He wept for joy and kept embracing now his daughter and now the man who had saved her.

Glad news travels fast, and the townsfolk flocked to the

river bank in their thousands to see the princess for themselves.

By order of the king, the youth was given chambers of his own in the palace, and the amount of gold he was to receive in reward was trebled.

It was evening, and the youth was about to go to bed when the little old man piped in his ear:

"Now that you are rich, there is no need for us to stay on here, we must be on our way. I am sure the king has nothing against you marrying his daughter, but you should not marry yet, you are too young. So come with me, and we'll roam the wide world together until you grow older and wiser."

The youth did not much care for this advice, but remembering that all of the little old man's counsels had done him nothing but good, decided to do as he said. The king and the princess begged him to stay with them a little longer, but this he would not do and prepared to set off on his way again. He now had enough money to travel in a coach, but as he was in no haste and as the knapsack gave him food and drink, he went on on foot.

One day, when he stopped for a rest, he again felt a tickling behind his ear and heard the little old man say to him with his squeaky little voice.

"Some of the townsfolk are after you, they want to rob you of your knapsack. It was the three apprentices who told them about it. Now, what you must do is take a cudgel of a length to fit into your knapsack, bore a hole in it and fill the hole with molten lead. Armed with this, you will be well able to defend yourself!"

The youth did as the little old man said and thrust the cudgel into his knapsack.

On the following day, as he was passing through a forest, he was attacked by a group of men.

"Tell the cudgel to jump out of the knapsack!" said the little old man in a whisper.

This the youth did, and at once the most wonderful thing happened, for the cudgel jumped out of the knapsack, fell on the men and began beating them so hard that they took to their heels.

One evening the youth came to a village where a fête was being held, some of the people singing songs and others dancing on the green.

Suddenly the youth, who had been admiring the dancers, heard the little old man hiding behind his ear whisper:

"We have come here at a lucky hour, for the villain I am after is here. If my plan comes off, and it is bound to if you go about things properly, I will be able to square accounts with him at last. Take a good look at the dancers, and you will see among them a girl who has a bright ribbon round her neck. Invite her to dance, and then seize the ribbon and rip it in two."

The youth drew near the dancers and saw the girl with the ribbon. She was tall and handsome, and there was a crowd of young men around her.

The youth came up to the girl and invited her to dance with him. They began to dance, and he seized the ribbon she had round her neck and ripped it in two. The girl gave a heart-rending scream and vanished.

Alarmed by the scream, the dancers and the lookers-on turned and saw a man with a funny grey beard running as fast as his legs could carry him for the forest, with another and taller man close at his heels. But it had grown quite dark by then, the two men were soon lost to sight, and the merrymaking was resumed.

Wanting to find a place where he could spend the night, the youth made for the nearest house when he heard quick footsteps behind him. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw a man hurrying after him.

"Wait for me!" the man cried. "I am coming with you, for I am still in your debt. Don't you know me now that I have my proper shape back again? Not only did you free me from

captivity but helped me capture my worst enemy as well. Now I need not hide in your pocket any more."

And the little old man or, as we will now call him, the good magician, told the youth that he had caught his enemy and bound him. The man would be unable to escape, for he had lost his magic power together with the ribbon, which was not a ribbon at all but a live snake.

"I am going to take my cudgel and beat him with it till he tells me where the three princesses that he carried off these seven hundred years ago together with all their countless treasures are," he said, and added: "If we find them and you succeed in breaking the magic spell cast over them, then you will be both rich and happy."

The two had a good meal and then lay down for a sleep.

On the following morning they set off for the forest together to see how the captured sorcerer was faring. They found him all rolled up into a ball like a hedgehog and unable so much as to stir as his arms and legs had been bound and a stick passed under his knees.

"Out of the knapsack, cudgel!" ordered the good magician.

And the cudgel flew at the evil sorcerer and began beating him very, very hard just as if it had set out to mash every bone in his body. The sorcerer wept and cried and begged for mercy, but when the good magician commanded him to bring back the three princesses and all their countless treasures, he said that so much time had passed since he had carried them off that he no longer remembered where he had taken them. The good magician the ordered the cudgel out of the knapsack again, and seeing it, the sorcerer told them all.

Said the good magician:

"I am going to keep you captive until we have found the princesses and all their countless treasures. But I cannot leave you here, for someone who does not know who you are, may take pity on you and free you."

With these words he seized the sorcerer, heaved him up

on to his back like a bale of tow, carried him to a deep ravine and threw him down into it.

"Wait there until we come back!" he cried.

Now, the place the sorcerer had told them of lay far, far away, and they could only get there by means of magic. So the good magician turned the knapsack into a trough, one with wings on either side of it, and just big enough to hold two people.

No sooner had the two friends climbed into the trough than it rose into the air, and soaring to the clouds, flew south. It sped them tirelessly onward day and night, and they never ran out of food or drink on the way, for like the knapsack, it gave them both.

For over a week they flew, and at last the good magician ordered the trough to come down.

They found themselves in a vast sun-parched desert with ruins dotting the sands, and the good magician turned the trough back into a knapsack again, and hanging it on his friend's back, said:

"You will now go to a place where I cannot follow you."

He began scraping away the sand at the foot of one of the ruins and soon uncovered a trapdoor. Lifting its top, they saw a stairway that led deep underground. The good magician caught a large fly, put it in a box and told the youth to hide the box in his bosom.

"If you are asked to tell one princess from another, let the fly out of the box and watch to see on which of them it lights," he said. "She will be the one you want."

"Let come what may!" said the youth to himself, and he set boldly off on his way.

On and on he went down the stairway, and when many hours had passed he saw a faint gleam of light ahead. A half hour later he came out on to a large glade where stood a beautiful palace.

A little old man with a long grey beard met him at the palace door.

"Come in, my lad, and try your luck," the little old man said. "Once you guess which of the three princesses is the youngest, all you'll have to do will be to take her by the hand, and everyone who is asleep in the palace will come awake. If you don't, then you, too, will fall asleep and never wake any more."

The youth drew out from his bosom the little box with the fly in it and followed the old man. Passing through two rooms, they came into a third where stood three beds in which three pretty maids lay fast asleep, and so much alike were they that none could have said which of the three was the youngest.

The youth looked at the maids for a long time, but seeing that he could never tell them apart, let out the fly from its box. The fly spun round the room and then lighted on the maid in the middle bed. The youth at once came up to her, and seizing her by the hand, cried:

"Here is the youngest sister!"

The same instant the princesses awoke and rose from their beds, and the youngest of the three threw her arms round the youth.

"Thank you, brave youth!" she said. "You have wakened us from a long sleep and broken the magic spell cast over us. Let us make haste and go home now!"

They left the palace together and crossed the glade, but when they came to the place where the staircase had been it was no longer there, and they had to grope their way through a dark underground passage. They were out of it soon, but–lo and behold!–where a sandy desert had spread were lush, flower-grown meadows and where ruins had been stood a magnificent palace with a large town beyond it.

The good magician came forward to meet them. He took the youth by the hand and led him to a small lake with the purest, clearest water that ever was!

"Look at your reflection in the water!" the magician said.

The youth looked and could not believe his eyes: his

face had not changed, but he was dressed as richly as a king.

"Whom have I to thank for all this?" he asked.

"That is the knapsack's last service to you," the good magician said. "From now on you won't need either its help or mine, for you are going to marry the princess, and when the old king is no more, become king yourself. I hope that I have now repaid the debt I owed you."

"A thousand times over!" the youth cried.

And as the good magician said so it was, for only a few days later the youth and the princess were married, and when the old king died, the youth became king in his stead.

THE FLEETFOOTED PRINCESS

In a certain kingdom there lived a princess, and so beautiful was she that her fame spread throughout the whole wide world. From all sides, from the south and the north, the east and the west, wooers came to plead for her hand, and at the gate of the royal palace horsemen of noble birth mounted on their best chargers appeared again and again. But matchmaking was not so easy a matter for them as it is in our day when a suitor need fear nothing even if he spends the morning going round to seven different houses asking for the hands of seven different maids. The young men who wanted to marry the beautiful princess had to

be very brave indeed. For the princess had feet that were as light and fleet as the wind and she vowed to her father that she would only marry a man who was her match in this and more, being able not only to overtake but to outdistance her. Now, this would not have been so very bad had the princess not added another condition to this, and that was that any suitor she beat in a race be put to death at once.

Strange as it may seem, many youths of noble birth, though they knew that they were forfeiting their lives, took up the challenge. As a consequence, they had their heads chopped off and then stuck up on stakes in front of the king's palace where they struck terror in the hearts of would-be suitors.

Now, a person of sense will say that these heads must have been empty heads in the first place or their owners would not have parted with them so easily. But to say this is to forget that it is hot blood that flows in a young man's veins and sometimes drives him to rash and imprudent actions.

In the long run, however, the heads that crowned the stakes had their effect, for as time passed fewer and fewer wooers appeared in the palace, and if a young man of the right age happened to come there, off he would go again straightaway without trying his luck. As for the rare fool who did, he never saw his home again but left his head on the palace fence for ravens to peck clean.

The clatter of a horse's hoofs on the road had not been heard for some time and the people were beginning to hope that these vain attempts at matchmaking had come to an end, when a prince from a faraway land arrived in the palace. This prince was a clever young man, for before setting out to ask for the princess's hand he had spent several years training and had learnt to run so fast that he could outrun the fastest runners in his kingdom.

Now, because he wanted both to show how rich he was and to give his feet a rest before the race, he had set out on his

journey in a coach and taken a sack of gold with him, tying it to the back of the coach just as if it were a sack of oats.

He had only put a few versts behind him when he saw out in the open field ahead a man who seemed to be flying toward him as if on wings. Several moments later the man passed the coach.

"Stop! Stop!" the prince shouted.

The man heard him and stopped, and the prince saw that he had a millstone tied to each of his feet, which proved that he was an even better runner than he had thought.

"Why have you tied those millstones to your feet?" he asked.

"So that my feet touch the ground while I'm running," the man replied. "I would be swept up to the skies otherwise."

"This man could be of great help to me," thought the prince. "Who knows how things may turn out! If I see that I can't hope to win, I can ask him to take part in the race instead of me."

"Would you like to take up service with me?" he asked.

"I have nothing against it if we can come to terms. How much will you pay me?"

"I will give you as much to eat and to drink as you like, the finest of clothing to wear and a purse of gold every year besides," the prince replied.

They struck hands, and the prince told Fleetfoot to seat himself on the sack of gold at the back of the coach.

"Why should I do that?" said Fleetfoot surprised. "I can run faster than your horses."

They set off on their way, the prince in the coach and his new servant on foot, and soon saw a man sitting by the wayside with a gun in his hands. He seemed to be aiming at something, but what it was neither the prince nor Fleetfoot could see.

"What are you doing here?" asked the prince.

But the man made no reply and only waved his hand as if to tell him not to make any noise.

"What are you doing?" the prince asked again, but as no reply followed, repeated the question a third time.

"Be quiet," the man said.

He fired his gun and then rose and said:

"There, I've got him! Now I can answer your question. That was a mosquito I shot. He was trying to light on the steeple of the tower in the city of Babylon, and as he weighed over five poods and might have broken it, I had to stop him."

"Can you really see that far?" asked the prince, surprised.

"Do you call that far?" laughed Keeneye. "I can see much farther than that!"

"Wait!" Fleetfoot cried. "I'll go and see if he's told us the truth."

And with these words he took off as fast as the wind and at once vanished from sight.

"A wonderful shot like that might be of great help to me, too," thought the prince.

"Would you like to take up service with me?" asked he of Keeneye.

"I have nothing against it if we can come to terms," Keeneye replied. "How much will you pay me?"

"I will give you as much to eat and to drink as you like, the finest of clothing to wear, and a purse of gold every year besides," said the prince.

They struck hands, and just then Fleetfoot reappeared, carrying on his back the huge mosquito shot by Keeneye.

Keeneye now seated himself on the sack of gold at the back of the coach, and they moved on.

They had only gone a short way when the prince, who had been looking about him and letting nothing go unnoticed, saw a man lying by the wayside. He had his ear, which was huge

and looked like a trumpet, to the ground and seemed to be listening to something.

"What are you doing here?" the prince asked.

"Trying to find out if the five kings who are holding a council of war in Rome are plotting to fight against us," the man replied.

"Can you really hear what is being said so far away from here?" the prince asked.

"Do you call that far? So sharp is this ear of mine that had I wanted to listen to so much empty prattle, I could have known of everything that is being talked about throughout the world," Longear said.

The prince told himself that this man, too, could be of help to him.

"Would you like to take up service with me?" he asked.

"I have nothing against it if we can come to terms," Longear said. "How much will you pay me?"

"I will give you as much to eat and to drink as you like, fine clothing to wear and a purse of gold every year besides," said the prince.

They struck hands and then moved on, Longear seating himself beside Keeneye on the sack of gold and curling up his long trumpet-like ear that it might not brush against the ground.

They had not been on their way very long when a large forest loomed ahead of them. Even at a distance the prince could see the crown of now one, now another of the trees showing above that of its neighbours and then disappearing. He asked his servants if they could explain this, but they were as puzzled as he. That a tree, when cut down, should vanish from sight as it fell was only natural, but that it should rise into the air before falling was not.

The prince and his servants now reached the forest and saw a man there uprooting trees. He would come up to a tree, grasp it with both hands and pluck it out of the ground

together with the roots just as though it were a turnip or a head of cabbage.

The coach drew to a stop, and the man came up to it. Thinking the prince to be the owner of the forest, he said:

"Do not be angry with me for felling some of your trees, I did not touch any of the big ones. My wife asked me to bring her some firewood, and when you drove up I was about to take a few more logs and go home."

Amazed at the man's strength, the prince did not tell him that the forest was not his.

"Oh, I don't mind your felling my trees," said he. "You can take one of the biggest ones if you like."

The man was overjoyed, and choosing a tree so thick that he could hardly clasp it with both hands, pulled it out of the ground.

"Would you like to take up service with me?" asked the prince.

"I have nothing against it if we can come to terms," the man replied. "How much will you pay me?"

"You will get all the food and drink you want, fine clothing to wear and a purse of gold every year besides," said the prince.

The man scratched the back of his head.

"I'll be back in a jiffy, I'll just take this firewood home first," he said.

He gathered up the uprooted trees and went home, but, true to his word, was soon back.

Leaving the forest behind them, the prince and his servants drove on. Ahead of them lay a city, and on either side of the road that led to it were seven windmills.

Quick to notice such things, the prince saw that though the air was very still and not a leaf stirred on the trees, the arms of the windmills were turning. A sudden gust of wind made them turn even faster, but it died down almost at once, the air was still again, and the prince, who had been chilled by it, could not understand where it had come from.

They drove up to the city gate, and there, by the side of the road, was a man who was covering now one, now the other of his nostrils with his left hand.

The prince stopped the horses.

"What are you doing, my good fellow?" he asked.

"I'm a poor man and I needed a job," the man said. "So I decided to blow at the city windmills on windless days like this one and make them turn. But it is a trifling job and one that brings in only enough to keep me from starving."

"Do you find this work easy?" the prince asked.

"Yes indeed! I keep my mouth closed and one of my nostrils stopped up lest I raise a wind so strong that it will smash the windmills."

"Would you like to take up service with me?" asked the prince.

"I have nothing against it if we can come to terms," the man replied.

"You will get what my other servants get," said the prince. "As much food and drink as you like, fine clothing to wear and a purse of gold a year besides."

"That will suit me nicely until something better turns up," said Windmaker. "It's a bargain, then! Catch a bull by the horns, take a man at his word, as the saying goes."

Windmaker joined them, and the prince now made with all his five servants for the king's city, never knowing what awaited him there—whether he would marry the beautiful princess or lose his head on the block.

They rode into the city and stopped at the best inn, and the prince ordered the inn-keeper to feed his servants.

"Take this!" he said, throwing a handful of gold coins on the table. "I will give you more before leaving."

Then he ordered the city's best tailors and cobblers to be called in that they might make clothes and shoes for his servants who were dressed like beggars and "had nine trades to their name and hunger for a tenth", as the saying goes.

Rumour of the prince's wealth soon reached the king, but the prince himself only came to see him on the third day after his arrival when his servants' new clothes and shoes were ready.

Seeing how young and handsome the prince was, the king said:

"Forget this whole silly business, my dear young friend. You may be the greatest of runners, but you will never outrun my daughter who has feet like wings. I am truly sorry for you and do not want you to lose your life."

"You are very kind, Your Majesty," the prince said. "I am told, however, that if I do not wish to take part in the race, one of my servants can replace me."

"That is so," the king replied. "But what good would it do you? If your servant loses the race, as he is bound to, you will be the one to pay for it; your head, not his, will be chopped off and stuck up on a stake."

The prince thought this over.

"I came here to take part in the race and I would rather lose my life than refuse to do it and become a laughing-stock," said he.

And as nothing the king said would make him change his mind, the race was set for the next day.

The prince left him, and the king had his daughter called in.

Longear, who was at the inn but could hear everything that was said in the palace, stopped still at the king's first words.

"My dear child," the king said, "you have caused the death of many young men and saddened me deeply thereby. But not one of your wooers did I like as much as I like the young prince who is to compete with you tomorrow. He is both handsome and clever. I beg of you, for the sake of the love you bear me, to run less quickly than usual and allow him or his servant to win. Then I will at last have a son-in-law and one worthy of being my heir."

"What's this!" the princess cried, her cheeks flaming. "Do you think that I would do such a thing for the sake of some young pup and all in order to get married? Never! Better that I should remain an old maid to the end of my days. Who asked him to come here, in the first place? He came himself, unasked, like those others. Well, we have enough trees in our forest to make stakes for his and for all such empty heads. Once they are put up on the stakes the wind will blow these crazy notions out of them. If you feel sorry for the prince, send him home, but don't expect me to show him any mercy. He who doesn't listen to others has no one but himself to blame!"

Knowing how obstinate and ill-tempered his daughter was, the king argued no more, and Longear passed what he had said to her on to the prince. Just then, Fleetfoot, who was to take part in the race instead of the prince, came in.

"I don't want to be seen with these millstones tied to my feet, Prince," he said. "Order six bullock hides to be bought and have a sack made of them and filled with iron. I will carry it on my back, everyone will take me for a travelling apprentice, and then I won't feel ashamed."

The prince did as Fleetfoot asked. The bullock hides were bought, and the sack was ready by morning.

Heaving it on to his back, Fleetfoot made for the field where the race was to be run and where the townsfolk had already gathered.

Seeing Fleetfoot with the sack on his back, they burst out laughing.

"A wise man removes any extra clothes he has on before running a race, but this one does not even have the sense to take down his sack," they said.

Longear passed on to him what they were saying, but Fleetfoot seemed not to mind.

The race was to be run on a stretch of road seven versts long. On either side trees had been planted to shield runners from the hot sun, and there was a small spring at the end

of it. Fleetfoot and the princess were each given an empty bottle which they had to fill with water from the spring before starting back, on the second leg of the race.

The signal was given, and the race began. Fleetfoot swept past the princess, reached the spring, and filling the bottle, started back. He was halfway to the finish when he came face to face with her.

"Do stop for a moment!" said she. "I have hurt my foot. Won't you give me a little water from your bottle for me to bathe it with?"

"Very well," said Fleetfoot, who did not suspect that the princess wanted to trick him. "I'm in no hurry. I can sit and wait for you here if you like while you run to the spring, and then we can run back together."

He sat down on the ground, and the princess thrust a sleeping powder under his nose. He fell asleep, and she snatched up his bottle and made for the finish.

Now, Keeneye had had his eye on them and had seen it all. He picked up his gun, fired at the tree under which Fleetfoot lay and knocked down a twig. The twig fell on Fleetfoot's nose and woke him.

Seeing the princess's empty bottle standing beside him, Fleetfoot jumped up in alarm. He rushed to the spring, filled the bottle, and rushing back again, overtook the princess, passed her and came in first.

The prince was proclaimed winner, and the princess went home in a temper. The thought that another could run better than she was more than she could bear.

The prince and his servants came back to the inn where a feast had been laid out for them. They ate and drank, and the prince then brought out two bags of gold, one of which he gave to Fleetfoot for having won the race and the other to Keeneye for having wakened him in time.

There was much noise and merrymaking, but this did not keep Longear from overhearing what the king and his daughter were saying to each other in the palace.

"My dear child," said the king, "you must make up your mind to marry the prince, you really must. There is nothing to be done, a pair of feet that is faster than yours has at last been found! And I am very glad of it, since it means that, first, no more young men will lose their lives because of you, and, second, that I will have a son-in-law after my own heart."

The king wanted to go on but could not, for his daughter's tongue, numbed by fury, now loosened, and the words began to pour from her mouth like water from a spring. She said that if her father tried to force her to marry she would take her own life and that no power on earth could make her marry a man who owed his victory over her to the prowess of his servant.

Seeing that her outburst had tired her and that she was beginning to run out of words, the king tried arguing with her again. But nothing he said could move the princess.

"Give him half your kingdom if you must, only buy him off!" she cried. "I'll never marry him, never!"

The prince, to whom Longear passed on what was being said, was so saddened by it that his servants all felt sorry for him.

"Do not grieve, Prince," said Felltree. "The world is not as small as the princess thinks. There are prettier and better mannered maidens than she in it. Let her pine away, for soon no one will want to look at let alone marry her. And as for the king, you must make him pay for having gone back on his word. Ask him to give you as much gold from his treasury as a man can carry away in a sack."

Felltree's words cheered the prince, and he went to see the king.

"I will not insist on the princess marrying me if only you let me take as much gold from your treasury as a man can carry away in a sack," said he.

The king was overjoyed to be let off so cheaply and hastened to agree.

"It doesn't seem to enter the prince's head that gold

is very heavy and that even the strongest of men can carry away only a little of it," he said to himself.

And at that they parted, both of them equally pleased with the bargain.

Said Felltree when the prince was back at the inn again:

"Send your servants into town and tell them to buy up all the canvas they can find in the shops. After that call in fifty tailors and have them make a sack out of it."

The prince did as Felltree said, and the tailors set to work. Knowing that they would be well paid, they sat bent over their sewing the whole night through, and the one care each had was how to keep his eyes from being put out by his neighbour's flying needle. Not for nothing is it said that the mistress of the house has only to put a roast of meat in the oven for the needle to start dancing in a tailor's hand!

The sack was ready before noon, and Felltree took it, and throwing it over his shoulder, went with it to the treasury.

Seeing how huge the sack was, the treasurer burst out laughing.

"Haven't you made a mistake, my good man?" he said. "Your sack is far too large. If it was chaff you wanted, you shouldn't have come here."

"That's all right, at least the gold won't fall out of it," said Felltree.

They went to the storeroom, which was filled with barrels of gold, and the treasurer said in mocking tones:

"Is there enough gold here, do you think, to fill your sack?"

"We'll see," Felltree said. "I can't tell yet. Why, my master the prince thought he would be taking a young wife home when he came here, and all he is getting is a little gold. Oh, well, a sack of gold is better than a wicked-tempered wife!"

"A pity you haven't brought a scoop with you! It's slow work filling a sack without one."

"My father used to say that he who hasn't a cup must drink straight from the keg," Felltree said.

And lifting the first barrel of gold as if it was a bagful of down, he asked the treasurer to hold the sack for him and poured the coins into it.

When he had done the same with the second and third barrels, the treasurer turned white. Soon all the barrels were empty but the sack was not even half full.

"Hasn't the king any more gold?" Felltree asked.

"There is some in the chests by the wall but it's in bars," the treasurer said.

"Let's have it," said Felltree, and he emptied the chests in the same way as he had the barrels.

When the storeroom had been swept clean of gold, Felltree heaved the sack on to his back and made off for the inn. And as for the treasurer, he ran as fast as his legs could carry him to the king, and he left the door of the storeroom open, for, with the gold gone, he had no need any more of bolting and locking it.

When the king had heard him out he was filled with fear and sent for his daughter.

"See what you have done, your obstinacy is to blame for all this!" he cried. "I am ruined and as poor as a church mouse! And a king without money is like one without hands. I cannot even war against my enemies! When my men hear that I cannot pay them they will run away from me."

"You must get your gold back," said the princess. "Surely we can think of a way of doing it."

They thought and they thought, but they had not yet made up their minds what to do when the prince left the city.

"There is nothing for it now but to use force," the princess said. "Muster your host and send it after him. He could hardly have gone very far with so heavy a load."

The king did as the princess said and sent his armies after the prince, the horse leading the way and the foot following, while he and his daughter made up the rear in

a coach. To encourage his men the king said that a third of the gold they recovered would be theirs.

In the meantime the prince and his servants had put many miles between themselves and the city, and they might have gone much farther had not Felltree, who carried the sack, been forced to travel on foot. For even if enough horses could be found, where could they get a wagon with axles strong enough to support such a weight?

When Felltree, the sack on his back, had made his way over a hill and sat down for a rest at its foot, Longear told his friends what had been said in the palace, and Keeneye said that he could already see the king's armies.

"Let's not stay so close to the hill, it'll make it easier for me to blow at the king's men when they reach its top if we are farther from it," Windmaker said.

They went a little farther, found a place that suited them better, sat down there and waited.

Now Keeneye had kept his eyes on the hill, and as soon as he said that the first horsemen were on its top, Windmaker puffed out his cheeks and began to blow.

And—o wonder of wonders!—like dust raised by a whirlwind the men and the horses were borne high into the air and then fell to the ground and were killed. The same fate overtook the foot. Soon nothing was left on the hilltop save the king's coach with the king and the princess in it.

"Shall I blow at them, too?" Windmaker asked.

"No," said the prince. "I want to talk with them first."

He got into his coach, drove uphill where the king was waiting, bowed to him and said:

"You have lost everything, your gold and your men, Your Majesty, but give me your daughter in marriage, and all will be well with you again."

"You can have her!" the king cried.

"Good!" the prince said, and he added: "I will have your gold sent back to you at once. And if you reign over your kingdom with wisdom and care, you will have new men

in time to replace those you lost today. Until then my servants will keep watch over your borders. One of them has sight so keen that he can see the tiniest speck in the sky, another, hearing so sharp that he can hear a mouse scraping deep underground, a third is so strong that he can carry away from a treasury all of the gold kept in it, and a fourth can blow so hard that he can blow a whole army away."

They came back to the king's city, and soon after that the prince and the princess were married. Theirs was a rich wedding, and when the feasting and merrymaking, which went on for many weeks, were over, they settled in the palace and lived there.

And at the king's death the prince became king in his stead and reigned over the kingdom for many, many years.

THE GRATEFUL PRINCE

Once upon a time the king of Kungla lost his way in a dense forest. He wandered in search of a path that might lead him out of it, but all in vain.

Suddenly an old man appeared before him.

"What are you looking for in this forest?" he asked. "There is nothing here but wild beasts."

"I have lost my way and am trying to find the road that leads to my house," the king replied.

"I'll be glad to help you if you promise to give me in reward that which you set eyes on first when you get home," the old man said.

The king thought this over.

"The first to meet me always is my dog, and he is the best hunting dog I have. But why should I give him up to you? I'll get out of here without your help sooner or later," he said.

The old man heard him out in silence and vanished.

The king wandered round in the forest for another three days and three nights, but no road did he find.

On the fourth day the same old man appeared before him again.

"Now do you agree to give me that which you set eyes on first when you get home?" he asked.

But the king was stubborn. He declined to accept the old man's help and began wandering in the forest again. At last, so exhausted was he that he dropped down on the ground under a tree, feeling that his end had come.

The old man, who was none other than the devil himself, came up to him for the third time.

"Don't be a fool!" he said. "Is your dog so dear to you that you are unwilling to part with him even to save your own life? Promise to do as I ask, and you will get safely home."

The king resisted no more.

"My life is more precious to me than a thousand dogs!" he cried. "I have a whole kingdom to think of. So be it, I'll do as you say! Take me home."

And no sooner had he uttered these last words than he found himself on the edge of the forest with the palace in full view.

He quickened his step, and whom should he see first when he got to the palace door but his little son, who was on his nurse's lap.

The king was frightened. He shouted at the nurse and told her to make haste and take away the child. Just then his dog came running up, wagging his tail joyfully, but all he got from the king was a kick. Servants that have done

nothing wrong are often made to pay for what is their master's fault.

When the king's anger had died down, he ordered his son to be exchanged for the baby daughter of a poor peasant. The prince was taken to the peasant's hut and the peasant's little girl to the palace where she slept in the prince's cradle, under silken covers.

A year passed, and the Old Bachelor, for that is what Estonian peasants call the devil, came to the palace. He suspected nothing, and, thinking the little girl to be the king's daughter, carried her off with him. The king was overjoyed that his ruse had worked.

Time passed, and the prince grew up and returned to his parents' house to live there in great luxury. But he learnt how he had been saved, was grieved by the thought that someone else had to suffer because of him, and decided to save the girl or die.

One day he dressed himself in a peasant's clothes, put a sack of peas on his back and set off for the forest in which his father had lost his way eighteen years before.

Once there, he began weeping and wailing.

"What wild place is this that I have come to and who is to lead me out of it?" he cried. "Why, there is not a living soul here!"

All of a sudden there stood before him an old man with a long grey beard and a leather bag at his side, a true Tartu man by the looks of him.

The old man greeted the prince and said:

"I know these parts well and will lead you out of the forest if you promise to pay me well for it."

"What can I, a poor peasant, give you!" exclaimed the prince who was a quick-witted young man. "I haven't a copper to my name. Even this *caftan* I have on is not mine but my master's. I'm only a labourer."

The old man glanced at the sack of peas on the prince's back.

"You're not as poor as all that, that sack of yours looks heavy to me," he said.

"There's nothing in it but peas!" said the prince. "My old aunt, the only close relation I had, died the other day and she left me not a copper. There wasn't even a handful of peas in the house. And it's the custom to give people who sit out the night beside the dead soaked peas to munch to keep them awake. So I got my master to give me half a sack of peas, promising to do an extra round of work for him in return, and set out for my poor aunt's house. I wanted to get there in time for the funeral, but I lost my way."

"Oh, so you are all alone in the world!" the old man said, showing his teeth in a smile. "Would you like to work for me? I'm in need of a good workman and I've taken a liking to you."

"I don't mind, if we can come to terms," the prince said. "I've been a labourer ever since I can remember, another's bread is always bitter, and it's all the same to me what master to serve. How much will you pay me a year?"

"You'll get fresh food every day and meat twice a week," said the old man. "And if you are sent out to work in the field far from home I'll let you have some oil and some fish. You'll have all the clothes you need, and on top of everything else, a plot of land big enough to plant four sacks of grain on."

"Agreed!" the prince replied. "They'll bury my aunt without me. I'm coming with you."

This seemed to please the old man hugely, and he went into a dance, pounding the ground so hard that the trees swayed and creaked.

Then he and the prince set out on their way. The old man talked and laughed and never noticed that the prince kept taking the peas out of his sack one by one and throwing them on the ground.

The two spent the night in the forest, and when morning came, moved on again.

By evening they came to a large rock. The old man stop-

ped, looked round him carefully, whistled and then struck the ground three times with the heel of his left foot. The rock moved aside, and there, under it, was a door that opened on an underground passage.

"Follow me!" the old man cried, seizing the prince by the hand.

Darkness engulfed them, and it seemed to the prince that the road they were following was leading them deeper and deeper underground. Soon a gleam of light showed ahead, but it was quite unlike the light of the sun and the moon. There was no sky above as we know it, and the world, over which drifted a hazy, luminous cloud, was strange and unfamiliar. The land and water, the trees and grasses, the animals and birds were all quite different from those on earth. But what struck the prince most was the dead silence that reigned here. Birds sat in the trees and they craned their necks and thrust out their breasts as if in song, but not a single note could be heard. The dogs opened their jaws as if to bark and the bulls lifted their heads as if to low, but no sound came. The water ran over the bed of a forest brook, the wind pressed down the crowns of the trees, the flies and beetles flitted about, but soundlessly, without disturbing the quiet.

The old man said not a word, and when the prince tried to speak the sounds died in his throat.

A long time passed, and still they went on. The prince's heart sank in fear, and cold shivers ran up and down his spine. At last – o joy! – indistinct sounds reached his ear, and the phantom world about them seemed to come to life.

They heard a noise as of a large herd of horses making their way across a quagmire, the water squelching under their hoofs, and the old man said, licking his lips:

"I can hear the porridge cooking in my kitchen. This means they are expecting us."

They went on, and the prince seemed to hear a sawmill with no less than a dozen saws at work nearby, but his new master said:

"That is the Old Dame, my grandmother, snoring in her sleep."

They went on again and climbed a hill, and the prince saw the old man's farm, which was so big that it looked like a village.

Soon they came to the gate, beside which was an empty dog-kennel.

The old man turned to the prince.

"Into the kennel with you!" he cried. "And mind you stay there while I talk about you to the Old Dame. She is hard to please, like many old people, and cannot bear to have strangers in the house."

Trembling all over, the prince got into the kennel. He was beginning to regret the recklessness that had brought him there.

Some time passed, and the old man came back and ordered the prince out of the kennel.

"Remember one thing," said he in threatening tones. "You must live here according to the laws and rules that abide in my house. You'll fare badly if you don't."

And he added:

"You have ears and you have eyes;
Use them, lad, if you are wise.
Learn to listen and obey,
Do as I, your master, say.
To my questions, pray, reply;
For the rest, keep mum or die."

The prince came into the house, and his eyes at once fell on a pretty, dark-eyed girl.

"Could the girl be a member of the old man's family?" he asked himself. "I like her very much."

The girl said nothing as he came in. She was busy setting the table, and when she had done this, served the meal. Then she sat down on a little stool that stood near the hearth and took up her knitting. Not once did she glance at the prince.

The Old Dame was nowhere to be seen, and the old man sat down at the table alone, but he did not ask the girl or the prince to join him. There was enough food for a dozen people, but he ate it all himself.

"Scrape out the pots and pans, there'll be enough there for the two of you," he said. "Only don't forget to leave the bones for the dog!"

The prince frowned at this for he did not like the thought of eating someone's leftovers, but there was nothing to be done, so he joined the girl at table.

While they ate he kept stealing glances at her and would have given a great deal to be allowed to exchange a few words with her. But the moment he opened his mouth to speak, the girl would look at him imploringly as if begging him to keep silent. Willy-nilly, the prince had to speak with his eyes only.

The old man had stretched himself out on a stove ledge and lay there. When the girl and the prince finished eating, he said to the prince:

"You have two days in which to rest from your journey and take a look round the farm. But the day after tomorrow come to me and I'll set you a task for the next day. I always tell everyone in the evening what they are to do in the morning so that everyone might be at his job by the time I get up. And now to bed! The girl will show you where your room is."

The prince was about to ask him something, but the old man turned dark with rage.

"Hold your tongue!" he roared. "Just try and break a rule of mine, and I'll kill you. Off to bed with you now!"

The girl beckoned to the prince and pointed to a door, inviting him to open it. He thought he saw her eyes fill with tears, but afraid of the old man, he did not pause in the doorway.

"I'm sure this girl is not the old man's daughter," thought he. "She is quite unlike him. I wonder now, could she be the

girl my father gave to the Old Bachelor instead of me?"

That night the prince found it hard to fall asleep. When at last he did, his sleep was restless and the dreams he saw, frightening. In them he was beset by all kinds of dangers, but the girl came to his rescue every time.

He awoke in the morning resolved to do all the girl told him to, and since they could not speak to each other, to read her wishes in her eyes. Finding her at work, he began helping her. He brought the water, chopped the firewood and lit the stove.

After dinner the prince looked round the house and yard and was much surprised at not seeing the Old Dame anywhere. In the stable there was a white horse, and in the stockyard, a black cow and a white-headed calf. From the poultry-house, which was locked, there came a loud cackling, quacking and honking: chickens, ducks and geese were, it seemed, kept there.

The morning and midday meal proved as filling as the supper he had had the night before, and the prince might have become used to living in the old man's house if he were not forced to keep silent all the time.

On the following day he went to the old man for his orders.

"It's easy work you'll be doing tomorrow," said the old man. "You will take a scythe and cut as much grass for the white horse as it needs for the day and then you'll clean out the stable. But remember: if I look in and see that the feeding-rack is empty and there is dung on the floor, you will pay with your life for it!"

The prince was overjoyed.

"That's a trifling task and one I can easily cope with," thought he. "Of course, I've never handled a scythe in my life, but I am strong, and I've often seen the peasants cutting grass."

He was about to go to bed when the girl tiptoed into his room.

"What task have you been set for tomorrow?" asked she in a whisper.

"A trifling one," the prince replied. "I am to cut some grass for the white horse and clean out the stable, that's all."

"Oh, you poor, unhappy youth!" said the girl with a sigh. "It's a task beyond your strength. The white horse is none other than the Old Dame herself. So greedy is she that twenty mowers could not cut enough grass to satisfy her. And as for cleaning out the stable, why, it would take no fewer than ten men to do it! You'll never cope with it all by yourself. So listen to me and do what I tell you. Tomorrow, when you bring the horse an armful of hay, take a willow switch and a block of wood, make a noose out of the switch and cut a plug out of the block, and when the horse asks you what you need the noose and the plug for, you must say: 'The noose is to stop you from eating too much hay. If I see that you are being overgreedy, I'll put it on your muzzle and tighten it, and I'll use the plug if I see you piling up too much dung on the floor!'"

Having said this, the girl slipped out as quietly as she had come in, giving the prince no time even to thank her. But he took in all that she had said and went over it in his mind before going to bed.

Early the following morning the prince set to work.

He took a scythe and began cutting the grass, and he had cut enough in a few minutes to make up several armfuls.

Throwing one armful in the horse's feeding-rack, he went for another. What was his surprise on his return when he saw that the rack was empty and that there was enough dung on the floor to fill a wagon. Only now did he realise how wise the girl's counsel had been and that his life depended on his doing what she had told him to. Taking a willow switch, he began making a noose out of it, and the white horse turned her head and asked in surprise:

"What are you going to do with that noose, my lad?"

"Nothing much," the prince replied. "If I see you eating

too much hay, I'm going to put it on your muzzle and tighten it."

The white horse heaved a deep sigh and stopped chewing.

The prince cleaned out the stable and began cutting a wedge out of a block of wood.

"What are you going to do with that wedge?" the horse asked.

"Nothing much," came the reply. "I'll use it for a plug if I see that the food passes through you too fast."

The horse glanced at him again and sighed. That she had understood him became clear when half the day had passed and the hay in the rack remained untouched and the floor clean. Then the old man came into the stable, and seeing that everything was in perfect order, was much surprised.

"Is it you who is so wise or do you have wise counsellors?" he asked.

The prince was no simpleton.

"I have none to give me counsel but the foolish head on my shoulders," said he.

The old man curled his lip angrily, and muttering something to himself, left the stable. And the prince stood looking after him, pleased that everything had ended so well.

That evening the old man said to him:

"There is nothing really for you to do tomorrow, but as the girl is going to be busy around the house, you'll have to milk the black cow. Mind that you milk her dry, for if I squeeze even a drop out of her afterwards, you will pay with your life for it."

"That sounds like an easy job," thought the prince. "My hands are strong and I ought to be able to cope with it, unless, of course, the old man hasn't some trick up his sleeve again."

He was about to go to bed when the girl came in.

"What task has the old man set you for tomorrow?" she asked.

"I'll be free most of the day," the prince said. "All I am

to do is milk the black cow."

"You poor, unhappy youth!" said the girl with a sigh. "Why, even if you keep at it from morning till night, you'll never get the job done, for the milk flows out of her in an endless stream. The old man wants to do away with you. But don't worry, nothing will happen to you while I'm here to help you. Just listen to me carefully and do exactly as I say. Tomorrow morning when you go to the cowhouse, take a pot of live coals and a pair of tongs with you. As soon as you come in, blow at the coals to fan the flame and then put the tongs in the pot. When the black cow asks you, as she is bound to, what you are doing, this is what you must say to her..."

The girl whispered something in his ear and left the room, and the prince went to bed.

In the morning, as soon as the first rays of the sun had painted the sky pink, the prince took a pot of live coals in one hand and a pair of tongs in the other and went to the cowhouse where he did just what the girl had told him to. The black cow glanced at him once and then again.

"What are you doing, my lad?" she asked.

"Nothing much," came the reply. "Just heating up the tongs a bit. I am told that there are cows so wicked that they won't let themselves be milked properly. Now, I know an excellent remedy for that. You milk the cow and then you squeeze her teats with a pair of red-hot tongs. That keeps her from letting any milk run out afterwards and wasting it."

The black cow, watching the prince timidly, heaved a sigh.

The prince moved up a milk pail and milked her, and when he tried milking her again a little while later, not a drop could he squeeze out.

After a time the old man came in, but try hard as he would, not a drop of milk could he get out of the cow, either.

"Is it you who is so wise or do you have wise counsellors?" asked he angrily.

And the prince replied:

"I have none to give me counsel but the foolish head on my shoulders."

The old man stumped out in a rage, and when evening came he said to the prince:

"I have a small stack of hay still standing in the open that has to be carted away before the rains begin. Bring it home tomorrow but mind that not a single blade is left in the field or you'll pay with your life for it."

"That's easy!" thought the prince. "All I have to do is load the wagon, and the horse will carry the hay home."

By and by the girl came to see the prince again.

"I think I'm going to learn to do everything the peasants do here," he said to her. "Tomorrow I am to bring home a stack of hay and see to it that not a single blade is left in the field."

"You poor, unlucky youth!" said the girl with a sigh. "You'll never be able to do it, never! Even if you had the whole village to help you and a week to do it in, you wouldn't be able to cart away that hay. Take a heap from the stack, and the same amount and even more will appear again. Listen to me and do what I say. Get up before dawn tomorrow, lead the white horse out of the stable and take along some thick rope. Tie the rope round the stack, harness the horse to it and yourself climb up on top of the stack and begin counting out loud: one, two, three, four, five, and so on. When the horse asks you what you are counting, this is what you'll say to her...."

And the girl whispered something in the prince's ear and slipped out of the room.

The prince went to bed, but he woke early and at once recalled what the girl had told him. He took a thick coil of rope, led the horse out of the stable, and springing on her back, galloped off into the field. There he saw, contrary to what the old man had said, not a small but a huge stack of hay, as big as fifty stacks put together. He did just what the girl had told him to, and when he had climbed up on top of

the stack, began counting out loud.

"What are you counting, my lad?" the white horse asked.

"The wolves that have run out of the wood," the prince said. "I've quite lost count of them, there are so many!"

At the mention of wolves the white horse gave a jerk and a leap and started off at a gallop! Fast as the wind she went and was home in no time at all.

What was the old man's surprise when he saw the stack of hay in the yard with his workman standing beside it before midday!

"Is it you who is so wise or is it that you have wise counsellors?" asked he.

"I have none to give me counsel but the foolish head on my shoulders," the prince said.

Shaking his head and muttering curses, the old man stumped off.

In the evening the prince came to him for his orders.

"Tomorrow you will drive the white-headed calf to pasture. But mind that he doesn't run away from you or you'll pay with your life for it," the old man said.

"Many is the time that I've seen a village boy pasturing a whole herd," thought the prince. "Surely I can cope with one calf!"

He was about to go to bed when the girl came in to find out what task had been set him for the following day.

"A trifling one!" said the prince. "I am to take the white-headed calf to pasture."

The girl heaved a deep sigh.

"You poor, unlucky youth!" said she. "You'll never be able to do it, never! Why, that calf can run round the world three times in a single day! Listen to me and do as I say. Take this silken thread and tie one end round the calf's left leg and the other round the little toe of your left foot. Then you can be sure that the calf will always stay beside you, even if you are asleep."

 The girl left him, the prince went to bed, and when morn-

ing came, he did as she had said. Before taking him out to pasture, he tied the calf to himself with the silken thread, and the calf stayed by his side like a faithful dog, never moving away a step.

After sunset, as he was taking the calf home, the prince met the old man who frowned when he saw him.

"Is it you who is so wise or is it that you have wise counsellors?" he asked.

"I have none to give me counsel but the foolish head on my shoulders," the prince replied.

Muttering to himself, the old man stumped away.

Evening came, and he gave the prince a small bag of barley and said:

"Tomorrow you'll have nothing to do. You can sleep the whole day long if you wish. But you'll have to work hard this coming night! Sow this barley now, at once. It will come up and ripen fast. When it does, reap it and then thresh and winnow it. After that wait till the grains sprout, for that will make for a better malt, and then grind them into flour and brew beer out of it. Go about it nimbly, with an eye on the clock, so that when I get up in the morning you can bring me some fresh beer to try. If you don't, you'll pay with your life for it."

The prince left the old man without a word, but when he had closed the door behind him he burst into tears.

"The coming night will be the last in my life," said he to himself, "for no one can do what the old man has ordered me to. Was there ever anyone as unlucky as I am! What made me behave so foolishly? Why did I leave my parents and brave death?"

As he stood there weeping, the bag of barley in his hands, the girl came up to him.

"Why so sad?" she asked.

"You and I are to be parted for ever," said the prince, "for my final hour has come. Before I die there is something I want you to know. I am a prince, the only son of a king,

and might have become king myself one day, but now that is not to be."

And weeping bitterly, the prince told the girl what the old man had ordered him to do. He was a little vexed when he saw that the girl seemed untouched by his words and listened to him with a smile.

"Calm yourself, my dear prince!" she said. "There is nothing for you to worry about if only you do as I say. Take this key, it's the key to the door of the third poultry-house where evil spirits over which the old man is master are kept, throw your bag of barley over the threshold and repeat the old man's orders word for word, adding at the end: 'If you fail to do what I have ordered you to do you will die. But the task is not an easy one, and you shall have help. Tonight, the doors to the seventh barn where your master's most powerful spirits will be kept unlocked.'"

The prince did as the girl said and went to bed, and when morning came he hastened to the brewery where the beer was already fermenting in the vats and the froth rising and dripping to the ground. He sampled the beer, poured some into a jug and brought it to the old man to try just as he was getting up.

But the old man did not thank the prince.

"You could not have thought all this up by yourself, someone has been helping you. Well, you just wait, I'll talk to you later!" he said.

Evening came, and he said to the prince:

"You needn't work tomorrow. But when I wake up in the morning, you must come up to my bed and shake my hand."

The old man's strange request amused the prince and he laughed as he told the girl about it. But the girl looked troubled.

"Now you must beware, for the old man means to eat you up tomorrow," said she. "Before you go to him in the morning, take an iron spade, heat it till it is red-hot and hold

it out for him to shake instead of your hand."

The prince did as the girl said, and the spade was red-hot long before the old man had wakened.

But he was up after a time and called out angrily:

"Where are you hiding yourself, you loafer? Why don't you come to say good morning?"

The prince came into the old man's room and up to his bed and held out the red-hot spade, and when the old man saw it, he said in whining tones:

"I don't feel very well today and am too weak to shake your hand. Come in the evening, I'll give you my orders then."

Evening arrived, and the prince knocked on the old man's door.

The old man greeted him kindly.

"I am very pleased with you, my lad," he said. "Come to see me tomorrow morning and bring the girl with you. I know that you love one another and will help you to get married."

At this the prince wanted to sing and dance for joy, but remembering the old man's warning about making any noise in the house, did not.

Before going to bed, thinking that it would make her as happy as it had made him, he told the girl all about it, but to his surprise, she turned white with fear.

"The old man knows that it was I who helped you and he wants to kill us both," she said. "We must run away from here tonight. And now take an axe, go to the cowhouse, cut off the calf's head and then split it in two. In it you'll find a ball which gives off light. Bring it to me, and I will do the rest."

"It is far better to kill a calf than to watch one's beloved die and to die oneself," said the prince to himself. "And I do so want to see my mother and father again! The peas I threw on the ground must have sprouted by now and will help us find our way to the palace."

The prince came into the cowhouse, and there were the cow and the calf lying side by side fast asleep. He raised his

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axe, cut off the calf's head, split it in two, and lo and behold!—out of it rolled a ball which gave off light. The prince wrapped the ball in a handkerchief, hid it in his bosom and stole out of the cowhouse without waking the cow.

The girl was waiting at the gate, a bundle in her hand.

"Where is the ball?" she asked.

"Here it is!" said the prince, holding it out to her.

"Now we must run!" she cried.

She turned back a corner of the handkerchief in which the magic ball was wrapped, and everything about them was lit up. As the prince had thought, the peas had sprouted, and he and the girl could not possibly lose their way.

They hastened on, and the girl told the prince that she had overheard the old man tell the Old Dame that she was a king's daughter and that he had got her from her father by cunning when she was a child.

The prince, who knew far more about it than she, said nothing, but that she was no longer in the old man's clutches made him very happy.

The old man woke late, and his first thought was one of pleasure that he would soon eat up his two captives. He waited a while, but they did not appear, and he decided that they were busy preparing for their wedding.

"Hey, there, my lass! Hey, there, my lad! Where have you got to?" he called.

There was no reply, and he began cursing them for their slothful ways and shouting louder and louder. Since even this did not bring them, he got out of bed and went in search of them. He soon saw that they were not in the house and that their beds had not been slept in. He ran to the cowhouse and only then, seeing the calf lying there dead with his head split in two, understood what had happened.

So angry did this make him that he rushed to the door of the third barn in which the evil spirits were kept and broke it down with one blow.

 "After them!" he roared. "Bring them back here at once!"

And the evil spirits swept away, flying as fast as the wind.

The two runaways had just come out on to a broad plain when the girl stopped and said:

"Something is wrong, for the ball has moved in my hand. They must be after us."

Glancing behind her, she saw what looked like a black cloud that was fast gaining on them. So she rolled the ball three times over her palm and said:

"Hear me, hear me, magic ball,
For to you for help I call.
Do not let my poor heart break,
Turn me, pray, into a lake,
And this youth, for so I wish,
Turn, o ball, into a fish."

And no sooner were the words out of her mouth than she became a lake and the prince, a fish.

The evil spirits swept over them like a whirlwind but soon turned back and flew home.

As soon as they had vanished from sight, the girl and the prince got back their proper shape and ran on again.

The evil spirits came back to the old man, empty-handed.

"Did you see anything out of the ordinary on your way?" the old man asked.

"No," said they. "We saw nothing but a lake with one fish in it."

At this the old man flew into a rage.

"You blockheads!" he roared. "That was what they turned themselves into, and you should have known it."

And he broke down the door of the fifth barn and let out the evil spirits that were kept in it.

"Drink up the lake," he said to them, "and then seize the fish and bring it to me."

And the evil spirits swept away, flying as fast as the wind.

Meanwhile, the runaways had reached the edge of a forest. All of a sudden the girl stopped and said in troubled tones:

"Something must be wrong, for the magic ball has moved in my hand.

Glancing behind her, she saw a cloud in the sky and one that was darker than before and had blood-red edges.

"They're after us!" cried she, and rolling the magic ball three times over her palm, said:

"Hear me, hear me, magic ball,
For to you for help I call.
Do not tarry, don't delay,
Let me be a rose bush, pray,
And to shield us from our foes,
Turn this youth into a rose."

And lo and behold!—where the girl and the prince had stood a rose bush sprang up with one rose on it.

The evil spirits swept over and past them and then flew back again and made for home. They had not found the lake or the fish and had not glanced at the rose bush.

As soon as they had vanished, the girl and the prince got back their proper shape. They rested a while and then ran on.

"What—you didn't find them?" cried the old man when the evil spirits returned, weary and out of breath.

"No," said the oldest of them. "We saw neither lake nor fish."

"And you noticed nothing out of the ordinary on the way?" the old man asked.

"No. We only saw a rose bush with one rose on it on the edge of the forest."

"Fools! Blockheads!" shouted the old man. "That was what they turned themselves into, and you should have known it."

And he ran to the seventh barn and sent the strongest and mightiest of the evil spirits after the runaways.

"Drag them here, dead or alive, no matter what shape they take!" he roared. "Tear out the rose bush by the roots! Seize anything you see on the way!"

And the evil spirits swept off, flying as fast as a whirlwind.

 The prince and the girl had only just sat down under a

tree for a rest when the girl felt the ball move in her hand again.

"Something is wrong!" she cried. "They must be after us and getting close. It's just that we can't see them behind the trees."

She rolled the ball three times over her palm and said:

"Hear me, hear me, magic ball,
For to you for help I call.
Do not tarry, don't delay,
Let me be a wind, I pray,
And lest we be caught and die,
Turn this youth into a fly!"

And the same instant the girl turned into a wind and the prince into a fly.

The evil spirits swept over them like a thunder-cloud, but not finding the rose bush or the rose, flew home.

No sooner were they out of sight than the girl and the prince got back their proper shape.

"Now we must run as fast as we can!" the girl cried. "For the old man might go after us himself and he will know us no matter what shape we take."

And away they ran and did not stop till they reached an underground passage. They crawled inside, and the magic ball lighting the way for them, ran up the passage which climbed higher and higher. Sore of foot and breathless, they got to a large rock, and the girl rolled the magic ball over her palm again three times and said:

"Hear me, hear me, magic ball,
For to you for help I call.
Push the rock aside that we
May at last be safe and free!"

The same instant the rock moved aside, and the prince and the girl found themselves safely on earth again.

"We're saved!" the girl cried. "No one has us in his power here and none will get the better of us by cunning. But now

we must part. You must go to see your parents and I in search of mine."

"No, I don't want us to part," said the prince. "Let us get married so that we can share joy and happiness as we have shared grief and sorrow."

And so hard did he plead with her that she could not refuse him, and they went on together.

By and by they met a woodcutter who told them that the palace and, indeed, the whole land was in mourning and had been ever since the king's son had vanished.

With the help of the magic ball the girl got the prince some handsome clothes that he might appear before his father as befitted a king's son, and it was arranged between them that he was to go to see him alone, leaving her to await his return in the hut of one of the peasants.

But grief at the loss of his son had overcome the king and he died without learning of his return. On his death-bed he repented of his sins, confessing that he had given a child, a little girl, up to the devil.

The prince who was a good and loving son, wept over his father and buried him with all the honours due him. For three days he did not eat or drink and gave himself up wholly to his grief, but on the fourth day he appeared before the townsfolk and was proclaimed king.

Calling together his councillors, he told them of the wonderful adventures he had had in the underground kingdom and of the girl who by her wisdom had saved his life.

"This girl must become your wife and our queen!" the councillors cried with one voice.

The young king came to the hut where he had left his bride, and there she was waiting for him and dressed as richly as a princess. So splendid were her clothes, which she had got with the help of the magic ball, that when the courtiers saw her they took her for a king's daughter.

The two young people were married soon after, and the feasting and merrymaking went on for four whole weeks.

THE CLEVER PRINCESS

A certain king had a daughter, and so clever was she that it frightened people to speak with her. She could stop anyone's mouth and had only to utter a word for a man to be thrown into confusion and lose his powers of speech.

And so the king had it proclaimed far and wide that he would give his daughter in marriage to the one who got the better of her in an argument.

Young men, all seeking to marry the princess, flocked to the palace. They came in such numbers that the place was packed with them. No sooner did one leave than others appeared. But not a man among them could out-talk the princess who al-

ways held her own in every argument.

However, there were so many of them that the princess was beginning to feel quite worn out, for she had no time left to comb her hair even. And as for the old king, he was kept so busy that he slept in his clothes.

At length, vexed beyond endurance, the king announced that those who could not think of a sensible word to say and only came to the palace to play the fool would be severely punished.

The army of wooers melted away at once, and by the look of it the princess was now in danger of never marrying.

It was then that a young beggar, hearing that the princess would marry the one who got the better of her in an argument, said to himself:

"Why shouldn't I try my luck? If it turns my way, then I'll become the king's son-in-law; if not, not: I'll take my punishment and go."

And with these words the beggar set off for the palace.

He walked and he walked and he saw a dead crow lying in the road.

"Who knows but that it might come in handy!" said he to himself, and he thrust the crow into his sack.

He walked on and soon came across an old tub.

"Who knows but that the tub may come in handy, too!" thought he. "I think I'd better take it."

And slipping the tub, cracked though it was, into his sack, he went on again.

By and by he found a stake, and then a hoop, and a little later, a ram's horn, and these, too, he picked up and took with him.

He reached the town, but not liking to look for lodgings there, asked the owner of a nearby farm to let him in for the night. He told the farmer and his wife where he was going and why but they only laughed at him.

"What do you want to court trouble for!" said they.

"I'll be all right!" the beggar replied. "I have a mouth

under my nose and a tongue in my mouth, so I'll find what to say to the princess."

On the following morning the beggar rose at dawn and went straight to the palace.

"What do you want?" the king's servant asked him.

"I have come to woo the princess!" replied the beggar.

The servant burst out laughing.

"Why should the princess want to talk with a foolish lad like you!" said he. "You'd better grow up and learn some wisdom first."

But the beggar would not take no for an answer and pleaded with the servant till at last he persuaded him to tell the princess what he was there for.

"If this young scamp is here to make fun of me, I won't be the least bit sorry to see him become shorter by a head," the princess said.

And she asked the servant to show the beggar in.

"Greetings to you, o bride with hands of ice!" said the beggar as he came into the princess's chamber.

The princess was not at all put out.

"My hands are not cold," said she. "They are warm. Warm enough to roast a crow in."

"Let's see if that is indeed so!" said the beggar, and he brought the dead crow out of his sack.

The princess never batted an eye.

"Let's!" said she, and added: "Only won't the fat drip to the floor?"

"Not if we catch it in this tub!" said the beggar, taking the tub out of the sack.

"The tub is cracked and might leak," returned the princess.

"Not if we draw this hoop round it tightly enough!" the beggar said, bringing out the hoop.

"How can we do that?" said the princess, and she took the hoop and held it to the tub. "The hoop is too large for the tub and will hang loose!"

The beggar reached into the sack.

"We'll make it fit with the help of this stake!" said he, pulling out the stake.

The princess saw that the beggar was getting the better of her but did not like to admit it.

"How you do go on!" said she. "You'll twist your tongue before you know it."

The beggar reached into his sack again and brought out the ram's horn.

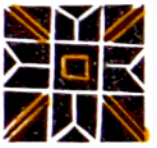
"Look at this horn!" said he. "Could anything be more twisted? Yet it's as sound and fine a horn as they come."

He waited for a reply but none came, for the princess could not think of anything to say.

There was no help for it, and so she and the beggar were married, and theirs was the richest wedding ever seen!

And that was how a beggar became a king's son-in-law.

So it's no use saying that you can't get anywhere by your wits because, of course, you can!



HOW A MAN STEPPED INTO HIS WIFE'S SHOES

There was once a man who was always telling his wife what an easy time she had of it.

"I am in the field all day working like a mule," he would say to her, "while you loll about the house," and fritter away the time. You do live in clover, I must say!"

The day came when she could stand it no longer.

"Why don't you and I change places?" said she. "I'll go out to the field for the day and you'll stay at home and take care of the house. Then we'll see whose life is easier."

The man was overjoyed.

"Good!" said he. "I'll stay home tomorrow, and do what needs to be done around the house, and you'll go out and cut the grass."

The next day the wife prepared to go out to the field.

Before leaving, not being sure that he knew what he was to do in the house, she said to her husband:

"Today is a Saturday, I'll be home for dinner, so make us some porridge and churn some butter. And don't forget to drive the cow out to pasture."

The man only smiled.

"Don't worry, I'll manage," said he.

The wife went away, and the husband lighted a pipe and began to think what he should do for a start. Deciding to make the porridge first, he washed the cooking pot, filled it with water and put in the meal.

The pipe kept going out, and he had to relight it again and again but he did manage to light the stove, and he fanned the flame so that the porridge might cook the faster.

The water in the pot soon began to gurgle, and he stood over it and stirred the porridge to keep it from burning. He forgot all about the cow and only remembered her when she began to moo.

"By the time I take the cow out to pasture and come back again, the porridge might burn," thought he. "I think I'd better add some water to it."

He went to the well for water, brought it back and began pouring it into the pot, but before he could stop himself had poured in so much that it overflowed and put out the fire. There was nothing to do but to light one anew, and as he was doing it the cow began mooing again louder than ever.

"You wait, I'll let you out in a moment!" the man cried. "Just let me light the fire."

But the wood was wet and refused to burn and he had to add some chips to it before it caught fire at last. The cow was mooing loudly again, and the man was forced to go to her. He came up to the cowhouse and said to himself:

"While I'm driving the cow out to pasture, either the porridge will burn or the fire will go out. I think I'll tie the cow by the outhouse and let her pick at the grass that grows near it, it's as thick there as anywhere."

And throwing a rope round the cow's neck, the man led her to the outhouse, tied her there by the leg and himself went back again to the kitchen.

As he was on his way there he remembered that he had not yet churned the butter. So he went to the barn to get the cream and the churn.

He then returned to the kitchen and began churning the butter, but feeling thirsty, threw down the spoon and ran to the barn where stood a keg of cider, forgetting in his haste to close the kitchen door. Now, a sow and her seven piglets were in the yard, and seeing the door to the kitchen standing open, the sow ran inside and the piglets followed her.

The man saw them just when he had opened the keg tap and begun drinking the cider. Remembering that the bowl of cream was standing on the kitchen floor, he jumped up and rushed to the house, leaving the keg tap open.

He ran into the kitchen, and there was the sow sloshing the cream over the floor. Snatching up a log, he flung it at her and struck her on the snout, and the sow dropped dead. There was nothing to be done, so he drove the piglets out of the kitchen and dragged the dead sow out into the yard.

All of a sudden he recalled that he had left the keg tap open. He rushed into the barn only to find the keg empty and the floor flooded with cider. What was he to do?

He looked round the barn to see if there was any more cream left to make butter of, and finding some, went back to the kitchen and set to work when it came to him that the empty keg might crack as it dried.

Taking the churn with him, for he feared that some other animal might get into the kitchen, he ran to the well for water. He put the churn on the edge of the well but knocked the pail against it, and it fell into the well with a splash!

A fine kettle of fish this had turned out to be! Now that the cream was in the well, there was no way of getting it out again and they would have to do without butter.

As he was filling the barrel with water he remembered the porridge. A smell of something burning came from the kitchen.

"The smell doesn't really matter," said he to himself. "The main thing is for the porridge to taste good."

He tried the porridge and decided that it was passable and if butter were added to it would be quite good. So off he went to the barn again to see if there wasn't some butter left over from the old stock. He looked everywhere but found none. At last, seeing a large barrel, he thought that his wife might have put a jar of butter in it. He bent over the edge of the barrel to see if it was there and fell in head first!

Now, as it happened, there was flour on the bottom of the barrel, and it made the man sneeze again and again. He wanted to climb out of the barrel, but struggle hard as he would, could not.

The wife came home for dinner. She began looking for her husband but could not find him anywhere.

The sow lay in the yard, dead, the kitchen floor was sticky with cream, the cow was stretched out by the outhouse, her leg broken, and the porridge in the pot was burnt to a cinder, but he was nowhere to be seen.

 Off went the wife to the barn, she looked in the barrel,

and lo! – there he was. She helped him climb out of it and shook the flour off him, and she had the good sense not to scold him for having made such a mess of things. She tidied everything, cooked some porridge, gave some to her husband and had some herself, and then washed the dishes and put them away on a shelf.

From that day on the man nagged his wife no more and never said that she had an easier time of it than he.

HOW A FARMER WAITED FOR DEATH

There was once a farmer who had many children. Time passed, his sons and daughters all married, and the oldest son and his wife wanted him to give his farm to them. But the farmer, though young no longer, was still strong and had no wish to give up farming.

Still, he did have thoughts of death and knew that sooner or later the farm would pass into his son's hands.

So off he went to see a wise man and learn from him how many years of life were left to him.

The wise man looked at him and looked again.

"You'll know your death has come when you have sneezed three times," he said.

The farmer went home. On he walked and all he thought about was how to keep from sneezing.

He had only just come into his own front yard when he suddenly felt a tickling in his nose and gave a great sneeze!

"O Heavens me, I've only two more sneezes left!" he said.

On the following day he went to the mill to grind grain. The dust there got into his nose and he sneezed again.

"There is nothing to be done!" said he. "I have one last sneeze left and then my end will come."

And out he ran from the mill so as not to sneeze for the third and last time. But the flour was ready and the sack was filled and had to be taken away. So he came inside again, threw the sack over his shoulder and made for the door.

By that time his nose was full of dust, and the farmer felt that he was going to sneeze. He tried not to but could not stop himself.

"A-tishoo!" went he.

"O Heavens me, here am I dead!" he cried, and dropping his sack, stretched himself out on the ground.

Seeing the sack of flour, the miller's pigs began pulling and tearing at it.

The farmer looked at them and sighed.

"You devils!" he thought. "Were I alive I'd have shown you, but what can a dead man do!"

Just then the miller came out into the yard. What was his surprise when he saw the pigs tearing at the sack of flour while its owner lay there and did nothing.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Why, just lying here, of course!" the farmer said. "What else can I do now that I'm dead? Were I alive I'd

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have driven off your pigs. Do me a favour, will you, and drive them off for me!"

The miller was more surprised than ever.

"Oh, so you're dead!" said he. "How very sad!"

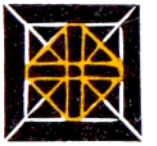
He took a whip and began flogging the pigs and he sent the whip flying over the farmer's back, too.

Up jumped the farmer from the ground.

"Thank you for bringing me back to life," he said. "If it weren't for you I'd be dead still."

With this he heaved the sack of flour on to his wagon and drove home. And he won't hear about dying to this day!

LITHUANIAN FAIRY TALES



HOW A WOODPECKER CHOPPED DOWN A SPRUCE-TREE

A woodpecker once flew up to a spruce-tree, lighted on its very top, and rocking back and forth, sang:

"I will chop this spruce-tree down,
Lop the branches off its crown,
Make a club, and with one blow
Every beast I see lay low!"

The rabbit heard him and was frightened to death. Away he ran as fast as his legs could carry him, and he met a wolf.

"Where are you running so fast, Squinteyes?" the wolf asked.

Said the rabbit:

"We're in terrible danger, Wolf. There's a woodpecker sitting on the top of that spruce-tree, and do you know what I have just heard him say? Listen to this:

'I will chop this spruce-tree down,
Lop the branches off its crown,
Make a club, and with one blow
Every beast I see lay low!'"

The wolf was frightened and away he ran together with the rabbit. By and by they met a fox.

"Are you two out of your minds to be rushing like that?" asked she. "Where are you going?"

"Oh, Mistress Fox, we're in terrible danger. There's a woodpecker sitting on the top of that spruce-tree, and do you know what we've just heard him say? Listen to this:

'I will chop this spruce-tree down,
Lop the branches off its crown,
Make a club, and with one blow
Every beast I see lay low!'"

The fox was frightened, so she joined the rabbit and the wolf and away they ran together. By and by they met a boar.

"Where are you rushing to—a ball or a christening?" asked the boar, and he added:

"I will come along if so,
For I love to eat, you know.
Good, rich food and acorn beer
Both the heart and palate cheer."

Said the rabbit, the wolf and the fox in reply:

"No, friend Boar, it's not a ball
We are going to at all.

We are in terrible danger. There's a woodpecker sitting on the top of that spruce-tree, and do you know what we have just heard him say? Listen to this:

'I will chop this spruce-tree down,
Lop the branches off its crown,
Make a club, and with one blow
Every beast I see lay low!'

So we are on our way to hold counsel

And decide what we must do
Without flurry or to-do."

The boar joined the rabbit, the wolf and the fox, and away they ran together.

By and by they met a bear. He was on his way home from the house of his uncle, the two of them having robbed a beehive together, and was still chewing on a piece of pie. Seeing them, the bear stopped.

"Where are you running, neighbours?" he asked. "I never expected to see Ploughman the Boar, Sprinter the Rabbit, Red Tail the Fox and Grey Coat the Wolf together. Why are you in such a hurry? Who is chasing you? You are not going off to war, are you?"

Said the four of them in reply:

"Hear us out while we explain
And don't wag your tongue in vain.
Dark the skies above us loom,
We are plunged in awful gloom.

For there is a woodpecker sitting on the top of that spruce-tree, and do you know what we have just heard him say? Listen to this:

'I will chop this spruce-tree down,
Lop the branches off its crown,
Make a club, and with one blow
Every beast I see lay low!'"

The bear was frightened, he joined the rabbit, the wolf, the fox and the boar, and away the five of them ran together. They talked among themselves and decided that they would die rather than let the woodpecker chop down the spruce-tree!

Gathering up courage, they ran up to the spruce-tree in which the woodpecker sat and called out with one voice:

"Look here, Woodpecker, listen to us! Do not chop down the spruce-tree or make the club. Let us all live together in peace like the good neighbours that we are."

But the woodpecker, who was still perched on the very top of the spruce-tree, cried again:

"Go away or you'll be sorry!

For I'll chop the spruce-tree down,
Lop the branches off its crown,
And whoever ventures near–
Thump!–will get it on the ear!"

At this the five friends raised a hue and cry. They shouted at the top of their lungs that they would not let the woodpecker chop down the spruce-tree, and clasping the tree, held on to it for dear life.

Said the woodpecker:

"I'll set to work in a moment, just as soon as I have whetted my axe."

"Listen to me, all of you!" cried the bear. "You push at the spruce-tree from your side, Wolf, and Boar and Fox and I will push at it from ours. That way we'll hold

it up nicely and it won't fall. As for you, Rabbit, you prop it up with your shoulder and do your best, mind!"

"All right!" piped the rabbit, only to cry out the next moment: "Whoa there, brothers, I believe the woodpecker has started chopping. A chip has just fallen on my tail."

"Hold it tight!" the wolf cried. "It's toppling over to our side!"

At this they all came together and set to pulling at the spruce-tree, the wolf and the boar from one side and the bear from the other till little by little it began to rock and to sag and then all of a sudden – crash! – broke in two. The wolf and the boar fell to the ground with a thump, the rabbit, the bear and the fox fell on top of them, and they all called out together:

"Please, Woodpecker, have a heart and don't kill us!"

The woodpecker flew up into the air and then settled on another spruce-tree.

"Think before you make me frown –
I have chopped the spruce-tree down!"

he cried.

And the bear said over and over again in piteous tones:

"And I thought I was holding it ever so tight. Oh, that woodpecker! I've never seen anyone so strong as he!"

ROOSTER
SING-TRUE COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO

Lassies and laddies
tiny as peas,
Listen to this tale of mine,
if you please.

In our yard there once lived a rooster and a hen. The rooster was called Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo, and the hen, Cackle-Cack. The two of them always had plenty to eat:

crumbs galore,
all sorts of seeds,
worms big and small,
grasses and weeds.

From morn to night Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo and Cackle-Cack

strolled about and dug at the ground
and cackled in glee
when a worm they found.
Shaking his comb as if in play,
this is what Sing-True
would up and say:
"Cock-a-doodle!
Here's a worm like a noodle."

And Cackle-Cack would reply:

"Cack-cackle, cack-cack,
He'll do for a snack.
Cut him up in two—
I want some, too!"

And thus it was that Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo and Cackle-Cack passed their days.

They worked very hard for their livelihood
and they shared all they found
in the way of food.
But what grieved them sorely and made them cry, though there wasn't a cloud in the whole of the sky,
was
that they had no children to bring them joy, not one yellow-chick, either girl or boy.
"Cock-a-doodle-doo!
What am I to do?"

Cock-a-doodle-doo would say with a sigh, "When I die who will get my red cap and sharp spurs?"

But one day Cackle-Cack laid an egg, not an ordinary one, but one of gold, and hatched a chick, a little son.

He was fluffy and small and white of breast
and of all the chicks by far the best!

His mother and father were so delighted with him that they could not take their eyes off him.
"Let us call him Yellow Nose,
so the wasps don't dare come close," said Cackle-Cack.

"Oh no, a name like that would only suit a crow!" said Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo. "If we want our son to be feared by all,

fox and ox and kite and hawk,
we must call him Twitter-Squawk."

But this Cackle-Cack would not stand for.

"You must be out of your mind! I never heard of such an ugly name. Twitter-Squawk indeed!" said she.

Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo was very angry.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!
It's up to me, not you!"

he cried, flapping his wings.

"But I don't want to make you weep,
so let the chick be called Cheep-Cheep!"

To this the mother agreed, and the matter of the chick's name was settled.

But they had hardly celebrated Cheep-Cheep's name-day and treated their friends to a pail of beer and ale when a terrible misfortune occurred: Sharp-Beak the Hawk, the fiercest hawk of them all,

carried off Cackle-Cack,
and she never came back!

Cheep-Cheep wailed and cried for days on end. Time passed, and Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo grew tired of

sitting at home looking after his son
and never having a moment's fun.

So he found himself a new wife and brought her home to live with them. Her name was Speckle and she disliked

Cheep-Cheep and treated him badly.

One day an egg cracked under Speckle's wing and a chick was hatched out of it, a naked, ugly little thing.

Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo wanted to call his second son Angry or Mighty or even Fierce, but Speckle put her foot down, for she felt

that her son was born to fame
and deserved a better name.

"No, no!" cackled she.

"None can compare to this chick of mine,
so let's choose him a name that is really fine.
Never was there a chick like him,
So fluffy and yellow and straight of limb!

In olden times, so my grandmother says, chickens lived to a hundred if they had long names. I want my son to have a long life, too, so this is the name I have thought up for him:

Little yellow fluffy ball,
Best and dearest chick of all;
Not another on the farm
Boasts such beauty, wit and charm;
Has a voice as loud and clear
As a grown-up chanticleer;
Being Sing-True's rightful heir,
Wears his father's prideful air;
Being Speckle's firstborn son,
Is a joy to look upon;
Little yellow fluffy ball,
Dearest chick among them all."

Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo

agreed to the name,
but was cross all the same.

"It's so long that by the time you get to the end of it,

you can be born, grow up and die!"
said he with a sigh.

As for Cheep-Cheep, the poor little orphan whose name was so short and easy to say, much sorrow fell to his lot. Whenever his stepmother Speckle wanted someone to help her or Sing-True, she would call him, crying:

"Come, Cheep-Cheep,
wake up and don't sleep!
Light the stove
and sweep the floor,
bring some water
and close the door!"

Nor was he treated much better by his father. For Sing-True, too lazy to call out his younger son's long name, would more often than not turn to Cheep-Cheep instead, telling him to do this or that.

"Help your father, Cheep-Cheep!
Find me a puddle that's not too deep,"

he would say, or:

"Let's look for worms under this stone,
I cannot be doing it all alone!"

And the orphan was kept rushing about the yard all day while his half-brother loafed in the sun and did nothing. But one day he got into trouble, for

while with his friends he was at play
he lost Sing-True's chisel and pipe of clay.

Sing-True was very angry, and wanting to punish him, flew up on to the fence and called for the whole yard to hear:

"Little yellow fluffy ball,
Worst, most stubborn chick of all;
Not another on the farm

Boasts so little wit and charm.
No, it's not the time for tears–
First, I mean to box your ears!..."

But before Sing-True could come to the end of his son's name and tell him what he meant to do with him, the chick ran away and hid in a growth of nettles.

And so it went.

Once, when Cheep-Cheep was busy pecking at some hemp seeds, a fox came stealing up from the forest.

Had she caught the chick, let me tell you, friend,
I would now have been at my story's end.

But this she could not do, for Cheep-Cheep called out at the top of his voice:

"He-e-e-elp! The fox has got me!"

Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo heard his son's voice, and flying up on to the roof, crowed for the whole yard to hear:

"*Cock-a-doodle-doo!*
Come to me, pigs, come, dogs and sheep,
for Mistress Fox has caught Cheep-Cheep!
If you have sharp claws
and are quick on your feet,
help me rescue my son,
I beg and entreat!"

The pig heard him and jumped up.

"*Oink-oink-oink!*
Wait for me, Sing-True,
I'm coming with you!"

she cried.

The sheep heard him and started baaing and bleating.

"*We're coming too,*
to give fox her due!"

called they.

The dogs heard him, they began barking loudly and made more noise than anyone.

"Bow-wow-wow!" went they.

"Away we go
Mistress Fox to lay low!"

And the fox was frightened and let go of Cheep-Cheep. Thus was his life saved and he returned home unharmed.

The fox, however, was a wily one and she was hungry, too. So she kept her eyes open

and at break of day,
with the sun's first ray,
crept up to the yard again.

Not meeting anyone who could stop her,

she up and seized Speckle's plump little son
and, in a twinkling, was away and gone!

Speckle heard her beloved son's cry and rushed to save him, cackling loudly.

"Come, pigs! Come, sheep, wake up, I pray,
before Mistress Fox has run away!"

she cried.

"If you have sharp teeth and are quick on your feet,
run and stop the thief, I beg and entreat!

She has stolen

Little yellow fluffy ball,
Best and dearest chick of all;
Not another on the farm
Boasts such beauty, wit and charm....
Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck!..."

"Oink-oink!" said the pig.

"Though of wit I'm keen as keen,
I don't know just whom you mean!"

"Bow-wow-wow!" said the dog.

"What a foolish hen and slow!
Whom she means I do not know."

At this Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo sang out:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! I'm sorry, friends, my wife Speckle has got a little muddled. What she meant to say was that the fox caught

Little yellow fluffy ball,
Best and dearest chick of all;
Not another on the farm
Boasts such beauty, wit and charm;
Has a voice as loud and clear
As a grown-up chanticleer;
Being Sing-True's rightful heir,
Wears his father's prideful air;
Being Speckle's firstborn son,
Is a joy to look upon;
Little yellow fluffy ball,
Best and dearest chick of all!"

Only then did the pigs, sheep and dogs understand what had happened. Off they rushed after the fox,

firing their guns and clapping their hands,
yelling and calling and shouting commands.

But it had taken Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo so long to speak his son's name that by the time he got to the end of it

the fox was out of sight and deep in the wood,
and they couldn't catch her try as they would.
Soon nothing was left of Speckle's young son—
the poor little loafer was dead and gone.

And as for Cheep-Cheep,

he grew up to be handsome and tall
and was loved and made much of
by one and all!

THE HEDGEHOG AND HIS BRIDE

Once upon a time there was an old man who made a living by making and selling brooms.

One day he went to the forest for some twigs. All of a sudden who should appear before him as if out of nowhere but a hedgehog. Back and forth he scurried and never left the old man's side. The old man sat down to have a bite to eat, and the hedgehog bustled about at his feet, now picking up a bread crumb, now licking a drop of milk from his boot. The old man took a liking to the little animal, and putting him in his cap, brought him home.

Morning came, the old man and his wife woke, and they

saw that all the plates in the house had been washed and set carefully on the shelves, the pots and pans scrubbed till they shone, the floor swept clean and sprinkled with sand, the water brought in, the firewood chopped and stacked and the fire lighted. And there was the hedgehog sitting on a stool and snorting, busily at work sewing up the old man's pants with one of his own needles.

The old man and his wife were very pleased with the hedgehog. They decided to keep him, and they named him Prickly and thought of him as their own son.

Prickly grew up and decided to get married. And it was not just anyone he wanted to marry but the king's daughter herself! So he begged his father to go matchmaking and ask for the princess's hand in his behalf.

The father, who loved Prickly dearly, went to see the king.

"Won't you let your daughter marry my Prickly, Sire?" he asked.

"Bring him here and we'll see!" replied the king.

The old man came home and told Prickly about it, and Prickly turned it all over in his mind and said:

"The king was right to ask to see me. Let us go to him!"

The old man tied a silk ribbon round the hedgehog, stuck a white clover in it, and putting him in his cap, brought him to the king.

The king took one look at the bridegroom and burst out laughing. So hard did he laugh that his beard shook.

"A fine bridegroom you've brought us!" he cried.

But the old man began praising the hedgehog and said that he was very clever and hardworking.

"Very well," said the king. "I'll let him have my daughter in marriage if only he cleans my cowhouse of all the dung that has piled up there in the last five years, strews it over the field, ploughs three hundred tithes of land, grows the wheat and reaps it, threshes and grinds the grain and then bakes pies out of the whole of the flour."

The old man heard him out and was filled with sorrow. But the hedgehog said, trying to comfort him:

"Do not grieve, Father. I'll try to cope with the work somehow. Only take me to the king's cowhouse."

The old man brought him to the cowhouse, and the hedgehog cried:

"Come, dung, get into the wagons and make off for the field!"

And at once the dung loaded itself into the wagons and rode off for the field.

The hedgehog began running up and down the unploughed field.

"Come, field, plough yourself!" he cried, and the field was ploughed.

"Come, field, harrow yourself!"—and the field was harrowed.

"Lie straight as strings, furrows!"—and there were the furrows stretched across the field straight as strings.

"Drop into the earth, grain!"—and the grains of wheat dropped of themselves into the furrows.

"Come up and ripen, wheat!"—and the wheat at once came up and ripened.

"And now be cut and gathered into sheaves!"—and the wheat gathered itself up into sheaves.

"Dry the grain, sun!"—and the sun dried the grain.

"Lie down on the threshing-floor, ears of wheat!"—and the ears of wheat lay down on the threshing-floor.

"Be threshed and ground to flour, grain!"—and the grain was threshed and ground to flour.

"Bake yourselves, pies, and then climb into the wagons and ride off to the king's palace!"—and the pies baked themselves, climbed into the wagons and rode off to the palace. A hundred wagonloads they made up all in all, and the hedgehog rolled ahead of them and pointed out the way.

Seeing that the hedgehog had done what had been asked of him and not wanting to go back on his word, the king

summoned his daughter, showed her her bridegroom and bade her get ready for the wedding.

The princess could not disobey her father, so she and Prickly were first betrothed and then married.

Late at night after the wedding feast when his young bride had gone to bed, the hedgehog cast off his skin, hid it behind the stove and turned into a handsome young man.

The king's daughter woke and was overjoyed to see the tall and handsome youth in place of the loathsome hedgehog.

At daybreak the hedgehog got back into his prickly skin again and began scurrying about from one chamber to another, snorting and sniffing as he did so. But as soon as darkness set in he again cast off his needles and turned into a handsome youth.

One morning the king's servant came in to clean the chambers, found the hedgehog's skin behind the stove and threw it into the fire together with the sweepings.

The youth woke up, he looked for his skin but could not find it anywhere. This made him very angry and he said to the king's daughter:

"It was an evil magician who turned me into a hedgehog. Now I must go off beyond the seas and you won't see me for seven years. And before I go I will put a magic spell on you: whatever you touch will turn to iron."

Off he went beyond the seas, leaving his young wife behind him, and whatever she touched turned to iron. She touched her legs, and they turned to iron. She passed her hand over her forehead, and her forehead turned to iron, too. This was a harsh punishment indeed, and the king's daughter suffered cruelly and wept because of it.

Cursing her lot and moving her feet with difficulty, she came to the house of the old broom maker, the hedgehog's foster father, and begged him to find his son and ask him if there was anything she could do or if she was fated to die bound in iron.

The old man took pity on his daughter-in-law and at

once made ready to set off beyond the seas.

It was not for a year nor for two years but for many, many years that he was on his way, and he was all grown with moss like an old tree stump by the time he got to where he was bound for.

He came out on to the shore of the sea and called:

"Come, Prickly, come, my son, swim out to me!"

The son turned into white sea foam, and as a wave carried him to shore, asked:

"Why are you here, Father? Why cannot you leave me in peace?"

The father told him of his young wife's sufferings, and Prickly heard him out and said:

"Let her come here herself!"

By the time the father came back home many more years had passed and he had turned into an old and feeble man. He told his daughter-in-law what she had to do, and bound in iron though she was, off she set on her way, dragging herself along with great difficulty.

A year went by, and another, and when at last she got to the seashore she, too, like her father-in-law before her, was all grown with moss. She stood there and waited, and her husband turned into white foam, and floating out to her, said:

"Listen to me. When evening comes you will see white foam by the very shore and red foam just beyond. Wait till the half-moon appears in the sky and then scoop up a handful of the white foam."

With these words he vanished in the deep, and the wife waited till evening came and then did just what he had told her to do. The moment the half-moon rose, she scooped up a handful of white foam, and there before her stood her husband, a tall and handsome youth.

"We must swim across the sea," said he. "Are you not afraid, my wife?"

"No, I am not," the princess replied.

"Then put your arms round my neck and hold tight."

She put her arms round his neck and they swam across the sea.

"Now we must pass through flame, for some dragons have made up a fire as hot as the fire of hell itself in our path. Are you not afraid, my wife?"

"No, I am not," said she.

"Then put your arms round my waist and hold tight."

The princess put her arms round her husband's waist and they passed through the flames.

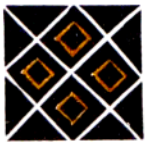
"Do you see that old oak-tree?" asked the husband after a time. "As soon as we reach it the evil witches waiting there will turn us into toads. Are you willing to become a toad's wife and spend two years under a porch?"

"I am!" the princess said.

The witches turned them into toads, and the princess and her husband lived under a porch for two whole years and only got back their proper shape at the end of them.

They came home at last and were very happy indeed, and the king held such a big feast in their honour that all the cats and dogs in the kingdom, smelling the good things roasting and boiling in the palace kitchen, came running there.

I was at the feast, too,
and with great good will
ate and drank my fill.



THE WASHERWOMAN AND THE COUNT

One day some washerwomen, the servants of a count, were out on the lake shore rinsing their washing, and they began talking amongst themselves.

"I will only marry a man who is tall and has blue eyes," said one.

"And I'll only marry a man who is rich," said another.

"I don't care if I'm showered with gold and dressed in silks, I'll never marry an old man and one I don't love," said the youngest and prettiest of them.

"Catch us believing you!" laughed her friends. "What if the count should ask you to marry him?"

"I'd rather die than live with that old man, I don't want his riches!"

Now, as fate would have it, the count happened to be walking along the lake shore just then together with his steward, and he heard what the washerwomen said.

"You will bring the third of those maids to my palace tomorrow," said he to the steward. "She is far too proud for one so poor."

On the following day the count opened his late wife's wardrobe and took out her best gowns and dresses of silk, her amber necklaces and her gold bracelets and earrings. His servants laid out all these things in the palace hall, and it was there that the steward brought the young washerwoman. The count showed her the silks and jewels and said:

"There's your dowry. Will you marry me?"

The girl burst into tears.

"No, sir, I will only marry a man I love," said she.

The count was very angry that a simple girl, a bondswoman of his, should turn him down despite his riches and high birth.

"You will knit me three waistbands," said he, "the first as bright as the sun, the second as bright as the moon, and the third as bright as the stars. And if you fail to do this by morning I will have your head chopped off."

The girl left the palace and went to the lake shore, weeping bitterly.

The *laumes* or witches who lived beyond the lake heard her and came running up to her.

"Why do you weep, pretty maid?" they asked.

The girl told them all about everything, and the *laumes* began trying to comfort her.

"Here is a pillow for you," said they, "and a quilt and a nightdress. Do not grieve and go to sleep."

One of the *laumes* made up a bed for her, another sang her a song and between them they lulled the girl to sleep.

Morning came, and when the girl opened her eyes what

did she see hanging on a tree branch and gleaming in the sunshine but three waistbands, their brilliance set off by the morning rays. One of the waistbands was as bright as the sun, the second, as bright as the moon, and the third, as bright as the stars.

The girl was overjoyed and took the waistbands to the count who, though he admired their beauty, was too hard of heart to be moved by it.

"You must fetch me a coach which can be hidden away in a nutshell," said he. "When I ride in it there must be bright day ahead of me and dark night behind me. And if you fail to do this by morning I will have your hands chopped off."

Off went the girl to the lake again, even heavier of heart than before, wringing her hands and sighing.

"O my white hands, o my quick-fingered hands!" she cried. "I am to part with you tomorrow. Without you I'll not be able to plait my hair or to water flowers."

The *laumes* heard her, they surrounded the girl and asked her why she was weeping.

The girl told them why, and the *laumes* combed out her hair, laid her down on a soft bed and lulled her to sleep with their songs.

Morning came, she opened her eyes, and what did she see standing before her but a coach! There were two horses harnessed to it, and they were stamping the ground with their golden shoes. The girl felt that there was something in her hand, she looked, and she saw that it was a nutshell. Just then a sun ray fell on the nutshell and lit it, and lo!– the coach and the horses rolled into it.

Overjoyed, the girl went to see the count. She opened her hand, and the coach rolled out of the nutshell. The count got into the coach and rode off in it, and it was bright day ahead of him and dark night behind him.

Said the count to the girl:

"All this is simple witchcraft. But if you are really clever

you will bring me a magic mirror in which I will see both my past and my future."

What was there to be done?

The girl went to the lake shore again and she wept and cried as before. The *laumes* heard her, they came sliding over the water as over ice, and standing round the girl, began trying to comfort her.

The girl told them what the count had ordered her to do, and the *laumes* said:

"It is a difficult task that your master has set us this time. But never you fear. He'll stop plaguing you after we get through with him."

The *laumes* put the girl to sleep, and when she rose in the morning what should she see lying beside her but a beautiful mirror in which the sun and the stars in all their brilliance were reflected.

The girl took the mirror to the count who stared in it, and gluing his nose to it, cried:

"Ha! There's my uncle playing cards with the king and my brother talking to the queen! Why, I can see my whole noble family in this mirror! Now I'd like to see my future."

But no sooner were the words out of his mouth than he saw himself in the mirror hanging from a tree.

So enraged was he by this that he flung the mirror down on the ground and broke it to bits.

And from that day on he left the washerwoman alone and never plagued her any more.

THE SWAN QUEEN

Once upon a time there lived an old man and an old woman. Every morning they went out to clear a nearby forest of dry twigs and leaves, and the moment they left the house a white swan would come flying there. She would fold and put aside her wings, and turning into a maid, light the stove, prepare the dinner, clean and wash everything and then fly away again.

The old people had not a care in the world, for they came home every day to find everything done for them. But they could not help wondering who their kind helper was.

One day the old man remained home alone. He hid behind a tub and waited to see what would happen. After a time who should come flying into the hut but a swan! She folded her wings, laid them aside, and turning into a maid, went to the well for water, and the old man at once took the wings and burnt them.

The maid returned with the water and she saw that her wings were gone! She burst out crying and wept long and bitterly, for this meant that she was parted from her mother and father and her own true love, too.

Now, one day the king was out hunting near the forest not far from where they lived. He saw the maid and liked her, and he said to the old people:

"I should like to marry the maid. Help me, and you shall have as much gold as you like."

To this the old people agreed, the king married the maid, and in due time a son was born to them.

One day the queen came out into the garden with her baby son and what did she see but a flock of swans come flying near. At their head flew her father, singing as he flew:

"In yonder garden my daughter I see;
Though she has no wings, yet a swan is she.
On her fingers she wears gold and diamond rings,
To her little son a song she sings,
From a little gold book she reads him a tale,
A kerchief of silk behind her trails.
A pair of white wings to her I'll throw,
And she'll leave her son and with us she'll go!"

The queen's heart grew heavy, and she sang out in reply:

"Do not throw me the wings, for you come too late–
I wan't leave my son to an orphan's fate."

Just then the king came up to her.

"Why are your eyes red with weeping?" asked he.

"Our little son cried, and it made me cry, too," the queen replied.

On the next day her mother flew over her, and on the days that followed, her brother and her sisters, and they all sang the same song, but the queen refused to heed them.

The last to come flying over her was her own true love, and he sang as he flew:

"In yonder garden my beloved I see;
Though she has no wings, yet a swan is she.
On her fingers she wears gold and diamond rings,
To her little son a song she sings,
From a little gold book she reads him a tale,
A kerchief of silk behind her trails.
A pair of white wings to her I'll throw,
And her son she'll leave and with me she'll go!"

The queen could contain herself no longer and sang out in reply:

"Throw a pair of wings, O my love, to me,
And with you I'll fly far beyond the sea!"

The swan who was her own true love threw a pair of wings down to her, and she left her son and flew away with him. But he was killed soon after this, and her heart filled with fresh sorrow.

As for the king, her husband, he waited and waited for her, but as she did not come back, he married Laume the Witch.

The stepmother took a dislike to her stepson and treated him badly, but the swan his mother would come flying to the palace at night, fold her wings, wash and fondle her son and then fly away again, singing:

"The king and his wife
Repose in their bed;
The palace guards, too,

Sleep the sleep of the dead.
But my poor, dear son
Wails and cries on and on!"

But before flying away she would lull her son to sleep and he would not wake till she came back again.

The king was filled with wonder as to why his son slept so long.

One night he saw the swan come flying into the palace. She turned into a woman, his own dear queen, lulled her son to sleep and then turned back again into a swan and flew away.

The king thought and thought how to keep her with him but could think of nothing.

One day an old man who was known for his wisdom came to the palace, and the king asked him what he was to do in order to catch the swan.

"Watch and see which of the windows the swan flies out of and put some tar on the sill," the old man said. "Her wings will be glued to it, and if you seize her and tear them off, she will get back her human shape again."

The king did as the old man said. He put some tar on the window-sill, and when the swan's wings were glued to it, seized her, and lo!–the swan turned into his own dear queen again.

The king had Laume the Witch put to death and soon after that he held a great feast to which came folk from far and near.

I was there, too, I drank ale and wine, and all of it ran down this beard of mine.

"*A load of firewood I sold, I did;*
In my new bast shoes the gold coins I hid.
I lost them all but you found two or three,
And if you're a fool you'll return them to me!"

THE FOOL WHO BECAME A KING

On olden times, in the thick of a dark forest, there lived a man who had three sons. The father loved his two elder sons dearly but could not bear his youngest one, who was badly treated and called a fool by the whole family. No matter what he said or did, the others only laughed at him and declared that they had never heard or seen anything so silly. If the elder brothers took a dislike to a piece of clothing he was made to wear it; if a dish was not to their liking he was forced to eat it. Whatever they asked for they got, but not so he who was never given anything he wanted. And if ever there was a household chore they hated doing they passed it on to him.

Thus it came about, since the two elder brothers found such work beneath them, that he was the one who had to pasture the pigs. He pastured them day in and day out, and as he had much time for thought began to wonder whether or not there were people living beyond the forest.

One morning, he left the pigs to pasture by themselves and set out across the forest. He walked for a whole day, but there seemed to be no end to it. So he ate his dinner, climbed a tree, and tying himself to it, spent the night in it.

On the following day he went on again. He walked and he walked, and when evening came, he climbed a tree and spent the night in it just as he had the day before.

On the third day on he went again. He followed a path that led through a thicket and after a time he stopped and had his supper, but the edge of the forest was still not in sight.

Only on the fourth day, as he was sitting in a tree, did he suddenly hear the cocks crowing. He went in the direction from which the crowing came, and reaching the forest edge at last, saw a city before him.

He came into the city and stood there, marvelling at the sight of so many people.

Seeing that many were weeping openly and that the walls of the houses were hung with black cloth, he asked a passer-by why this was.

The man looked at him in surprise.

"Where do you come from that you don't know that the wicked dragon is to get the king's daughter tomorrow!" he said. "The lot has fallen upon her to be given to him this time. The dragon threatens to level the whole city with the ground if this is not done."

"Why does no one kill the dragon?" the fool asked.

"Everyone is afraid of him he is so fierce," the man replied. "The king has promised to give his daughter in marriage and his throne, too, to whoever saves her from the dragon,

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but even so no one dares to attempt it."

"Well, then, I will!" cried the fool. "Take me to the king."

When news of this began to get about, everyone thought the fool an empty braggart, and only the king was pleased that at least one man had been found brave enough to try to save the princess. He ordered all sorts of weapons to be brought him, swords, spears, lances, guns and poleaxes, and a choice of helmets and armour, too, but the fool took nothing but a large axe.

"I've never handled any of these fancy weapons before in my life," said he, "but I know how to use an axe well enough."

On the following day the king took his daughter to the forest, chained her to a tree with iron chains, and weeping bitterly, returned to the palace. The princess wept and cried, and the fool stayed beside her and waited for the dragon. It was a cold morning, and thinking to warm himself, he chopped some firewood and made up a fire.

As he was fanning the flame, the dragon came flying up. He snorted and opened wide his jaws, wanting to swallow the fool, but no sooner had he crawled up to him than the fool snatched up one of the larger of the burning logs and thrust it down his throat. The pain of it made the dragon open his jaws wider still, and seeing this, the fool pushed all of the logs down his throat. The dragon roared in agony and began rolling over the ground, and the fool went at him with his axe as if he were a block of wood. He chopped off his head and cut up his tail and went on wielding the axe till he was quite worn out himself. The princess saw it all, and at first she trembled with fear, but her fear soon changed to joy. And when the fool had cut her chains and freed her, she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him.

Evening fell when the king came to the forest, and what did he see there but the dragon hacked to pieces and the fool lying fast asleep, his head resting on the princess's knees.

The king embraced him and wept for joy, and from then on no one was there in the whole kingdom who was held in such high esteem. So fond did the king grow of the fool that he had his daughter marry him and gave up his throne to him.

After a time the fool bethought him of paying his parents a visit. He took his young wife with him, and off they set in a golden coach. Their way lay through a forest, but they had not quite reached the forest edge when the fool stopped the coach, put on his old clothes and went off to pasture the pigs as he had once done. And he told his wife to ask his parents to let her in for the night, to pretend that she did not know him and not to be surprised at anything that might happen.

The queen did as he had told her, and the fool, seeing that the pigs were out by themselves, pastured them till evening and then drove them home, cracking his whip and shouting loudly, "Come on, you porkers! Get a move on, dearies!"

His father ran out to meet him and begged him to be silent, but he only shouted the louder.

"Do be quiet, the queen is in our house," the father said.

But the son, pretending to be the fool they all thought him, replied:

"What do I care about the queen, I have to drive the pigs home. They have turned wild, what with no one to look after them, and won't listen to me, so I must shout at them."

He came into the hut just as if he had been there only yesterday, and sitting down at the table, began eating his supper.

"Where have you been all this time?" his father asked.

"I went beyond the forest to see if there were people there and found that there were, indeed, and many more than here," the fool said. "Unlike you, they treated me with kindness and respect, and, to crown all, made me their king."

The father heard him out and only shook his head and asked him nothing more.

In the meantime the mother cooked some supper for the queen, but was fearful of serving so high a personage. She asked first one, then the other of her sons to do it, but they, too, dared not.

Said the fool:

"Since no one wants to serve the queen, I will. She is my wife, and I love her dearly."

The mother looked at him and shook her head, but she gave him the food to take to the queen.

The fool carried in the bowl of meat and set it down on the table in front of the queen with such force that—crash!—it broke and the meat fell out.

"Here, lap it up!" said he and ran out again without another word.

The mother had been watching through a crack in the door and seen it all, and when he came back to the kitchen began scolding him for his rudeness.

"Where can a man learn good manners if he is out with the pigs all day!" said the fool.

"Whether you're out with them or not, nothing will change you," said the mother with a shrug.

After that he carried in a bowl of soup, and saying "Here's some soup for you!" set it down on the table in front of the queen with such force that the soup splashed over and wet her skirt. The queen only laughed, and the fool ran out of the room.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you pig you!" his mother cried. "You've ruined the queen's skirt."

"I don't doubt but she has another," said the fool.

Then he carried in a pot of turnips, and this he overturned onto the queen's lap.

"Here, have some turnips!" said he.

And the queen laughed so hard that she nearly fell from her chair.

It was time to go to bed, and the mother said to the fool:

"You'd better find yourself a place where you can sleep. Your brothers have taken your bed, so go to the cowhouse and sleep on the floor, there's no room for you in the hut."

"The cowhouse is unfit for a king to sleep in," the fool said. "But since there is no room for me, I'll lie down beside the queen."

"You were always a fool," said the mother, "but you never spoke such nonsense before. The things you think up! As if the queen would let you sleep beside her!"

"Just you watch and see how she treats me," the fool said. "She's my wife, don't forget."

At this the fool's mother, father and brothers burst out laughing.

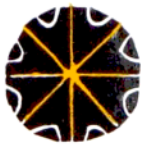
"Ha-ha-ha!" went they.

They settled down for the night, and the fool went to the queen's room. She welcomed him lovingly, as was to be expected, but could not keep from laughing all the same.

The fool's mother and father and his two brothers only gasped when the fool came out to them in the morning richly dressed and with the queen at his side.

They all went to pay the queen's father a visit, and they could not stop marvelling that the fool was now the king.

I once went to see him and stayed in his palace, and for all I know, he must still be alive and ruling the land.



THE TWELVE BROTHERS– TWELVE BLACK RAVENS

There was once a lord whose wife died and left him twelve sons and one daughter.

Some time passed, and the lord decided to marry again. His choice fell on a woman who, though he did not know it, was a witch.

"If you want me to marry you you must kill your sons, burn their bodies, wrap the ashes in paper and send them to me," she said. "But you needn't kill your daughter."

The lord thought this over, but as he could not think what to do he told his servant all about it.

 Said the servant:

"Do not be grieved. You have many large dogs, so what you must do is kill and burn twelve of them and send their ashes to your future wife. She won't know the difference. And after you are married, even if she learns the truth nothing will happen to your sons."

The lord did as the servant said. He killed and burnt twelve dogs, put their ashes in a bag and sent the bag to his future wife.

The witch looked at the ashes and said that she would marry the lord.

After the wedding she came to the lord's house and began to sniff and pry and snoop about. This she did for a long time and then she said:

"Where is this evil smell coming from? Let all who don't belong in the house turn into black ravens and go flying out of here!"

Now, the twelve brothers were hiding in the cellar, and at her words they turned into black ravens and flew out of the window.

Only his daughter was left to the lord and she knew nothing about her brothers, for her father forbade his servants to so much as mention them.

One day, when she was twelve years old, the servants got to talking among themselves in her hearing.

"Did the late mistress have only one child?" asked one.

"Oh no!" another replied. "She had twelve sons besides, but when the master married again, his wife, witch that she is, put a spell on them and turned them into black ravens."

This was enough for the girl who at once made up her mind to set out from home to seek her brothers. She sewed twelve shirts and twelve pairs of pants, twelve sheets and twelve pillowcases, and making a bundle of them, set off on her way.

She crossed a field and she passed through a forest and she asked everyone she met if they had seen the twelve black ravens, her brothers.

Once, when she was in a forest thicket, she met a hermit.

"Have you seen my brothers, the twelve black ravens?" asked she.

"No," the hermit replied. "But I rule over the clouds, so spend the night in my hut and in the morning I will command them to come down and ask them about it. They are sure to have seen them!"

On the following morning the hermit ordered all the clouds, white, grey and black, to come down to him, and when they did and had cloaked his hut it became as dark inside as on the darkest night.

The hermit stepped out on to the threshold.

"Have you seen the Twelve Brothers-Twelve Black Ravens, clouds?" he asked.

"No, we haven't," the clouds, white, grey and black, replied, and rising into the air, they went flying off in different directions.

Said the hermit to the girl:

"If you follow the forest path all day, by evening you will come to my brother's hut. He is lord of all the winds and can ask them if they have seen your brothers."

The girl did as he told her. All day long she followed the path that led through the thickest part of the forest and by evening came to the second hermit's hut.

She stepped inside and asked the hermit if he had seen or heard of the Twelve Brothers-Twelve Black Ravens.

"I know nothing about them," the hermit replied. "Spend the night in my hut, and in the morning I will summon all the winds, and if they have seen them they will tell you so."

In the morning the hermit began calling the winds together, and they came flying up, blowing and howling and roaring as they flew. The hermit asked them about the twelve ravens but the winds replied that they had never even heard of them.

Said the hermit to the girl:

"If you follow the forest path all day, by evening you will come to my eldest brother's hut. He is lord of all the birds

and perhaps one of them has seen your brothers."

The girl went on.

She followed the forest path all day, and by evening came to the third hermit's hut.

"Spend the night in my hut, and in the morning I will summon all the birds. If they have seen your brothers they will tell you so," the hermit said.

In the morning the hermit began calling all the birds together. There was a great flutter and beating of wings, and the birds, big and small, came flying up to the hut.

The hermit, the girl at his side, came out to them and asked them about the twelve ravens, but the birds replied that they had neither seen them nor heard of them.

And flapping their wings, they flew away.

All of a sudden a lame eagle came flying up to the hut.

"Why didn't you come at my call, eagle?" the hermit cried. "Where have you been dawdling?"

"A hunter shot and lamed me," the eagle replied, "and I couldn't fly any faster."

"Tell me this," the hermit said. "Have you seen the Twelve Brothers-Twelve Black Ravens anywhere?"

"I have indeed," the eagle said. "By day they fly around in the guise of black ravens, and when evening comes, turn into handsome young men and spend the night in a cave on the top of High Mountain."

The hermit went into his hut and came out again at once, bringing twelve pegs which he gave to the girl. He told her that she was to climb High Mountain and that as she was doing it, she was to drive the pegs into the ground one by one.

"Take care not to let the pegs slip out of your hands," he warned, "for if you drop even one you'll never get to the top."

And he told the eagle that he was to see to it that she did not fall and kill herself.

Off flew the eagle with the girl on his back and after a time

they came to High Mountain, and so high was it that its peak pierced the clouds.

The girl began climbing the mountain and driving the pegs into the ground one after another as she climbed. She had all but reached the top when one of the pegs slipped out of her hands. Seeing it drop, she stumbled and would have fallen had not the eagle, who was waiting for her on the mountain top, caught her up. With the claws of his good leg he seized her by the bundle she was clutching and carried her to a large cave. He set her down at its door and said:

"Your brothers come to this cave every evening. Go inside and you will see twelve beds. Spread your sheets on the beds, slip your pillow-cases on the pillows and put a shirt and a pair of pants on each bed. There is a loaf of bread beside each bed, and you must cut off a slice from each loaf and eat it. The bed closest to the door is your youngest brother's. Crawl under it and spend the night there."

With this the eagle flew away, and the girl came into the cave. Everything in it was just as the eagle had said. So she spread her sheets on the beds, slipped her pillow-cases on the pillows and put a shirt and a pair of pants on each bed. After that she cut a slice from each of the loaves and ate it and then crawled under her youngest brother's bed.

It was evening when she heard the ravens cawing. Down they dropped to the ground, turned into handsome young men and came into the cave.

Seeing the beds made up and the shirts and pants lying there, they were very pleased. They hastened to put on the new clothes and were about to sit down to their evening meal when they saw that a slice had been cut from each loaf.

Said the eldest of the brothers:

"It's good that the beds have been made up and the clothes prepared for us but why should some of our bread be missing! Oh, well, there is nothing to be done, we have to make the best of it."

 The brothers went to bed, and in the morning as soon as

they awoke turned into black ravens and flew away, cawing loudly.

The girl crawled out from her hiding-place, made the beds, swept the floor, tidied the cave and sat down to wait for her brothers. Evening came, and she again cut a slice from each loaf, ate it and crawled under the youngest brother's bed.

Soon she heard the ravens cawing and the next moment her brothers came into the cave.

Said the eldest of the brothers:

"Look, brothers, more of our bread has been eaten! I am not going to do anything about it today, but if the same thing happens again tomorrow, I'll not leave it at that but find the culprit and punish him."

The girl was frightened and began thinking what she should do.

Her brothers had been fast asleep for a long time, but she could not get to sleep hard as she tried, and not knowing what else to do, tugged at her youngest brother's shirt and woke him.

"Who's that?" he cried, starting up.

"I am your sister, brother," said the girl in a whisper. "I made my way here and found you, but our eldest brother is so angry that I don't know what to do."

"Go to sleep, and we'll see what is to be done tomorrow. Morning is wiser than evening," the youngest brother said.

Morning came, the brothers rose and were about to go out when the youngest brother said to the eldest one:

"You said you would punish him who eats up our bread. Would you do that even to someone very dear to us?"

"I see that you know who has been hiding here," said the eldest brother. "So out with it, tell us who it is!"

The youngest brother smiled.

"Come, sister, climb out from under the bed and show yourself!" he cried.

The girl did as he said and climbed out from under the bed.

"Had you waited for us at home for another year, sister, we'd have come back to you," the eldest of the brothers said. "But now we will be parted for twelve years more and will only meet again if you keep silent and never utter a word in all that time."

And telling her to get on his back, he turned into a black raven, and so did his brothers, and away they flew!

They took the girl to a dense forest, put her on the top of a tall spruce-tree and bade her goodbye.

A long time passed, the girl's clothes were worn to shreds, and still she sat there and never stirred.

One day a prince and a group of huntsmen came riding into the forest, and one of the dogs they had with them stopped by the tree in which the girl sat and began barking loudly. This, the prince knew, meant that someone was hiding in the tree, but though he and the others called to him, asking who he was, he made no reply.

The prince turned to one of the servants.

"Climb the tree and get him down here," he said.

The servant began climbing the tree, but the girl pointed to herself, showing him that she had no clothes on, and he jumped to the ground and told the prince that there was a naked girl there.

The prince gave him some clothes and these the servant passed on to the girl who put them on before climbing down from the tree. The prince was smitten with the girl. He brought her home and told his parents that he wanted to marry her.

The king and queen were loath to let the prince marry a mute, but the prince pleaded so hard that they finally agreed to it. The prince and the girl were married, and when several years had passed a son was born to them. Now, the prince was away from home at the time, and his young wife was put in the care of the witch, her stepmother, who threw out the baby, put a pup in its place, and showing it to the courtiers, said:

"Just see what she has given birth to!"

The king and queen were horrified and wrote to their son, telling him to come back at once and drive out his wife.

The prince came back, he looked at his wife, and so sweet and beautiful did he think her that he refused to do as they said.

A year went by, the prince's wife gave birth to their second son and the prince being away again, his wife's stepmother threw out this baby, too, put a kitten in its place, and showing it to the courtiers, said:

"Just see what she has given birth to!"

The king and queen were very angry and they wrote to their son, who wrote back telling them to do nothing until his return.

The prince came back, and seeing his wife, said:

"Mine is a good wife and I will not part with her. Let us wait and see what happens."

Another year went by, and the prince was away again when his wife gave birth to their third son. The witch threw him away, too, and showed everyone a pup, saying that that was what the princess had given birth to, and the king and queen wrote to their son bidding him return at once.

The prince came back, and though he was sorry for his wife he could not think of a way of saving her.

"Do as you think fit!" said he to his parents.

The princess was tried, and the judges said that she was a witch and condemned her to the stake.

A fire was made up, and the princess was led to it, but it began to rain, the fire went out, and the king ordered dry brushwood to be brought that it might be kindled again.

Now, it was at that very moment that the twelve years since the girl had parted from her brothers, the twelve black ravens, were up. The fire had just been started when lo!—they came flying up one after another and dropping to the ground. The oldest of them turned into a handsome young man and came up to the stake, leading a three-year-old boy by the

hand, the second brother turned into a handsome young man and came up to the stake leading a two-year-old boy by the hand, and behind them came the third brother, who had also turned into a handsome young man, carrying in his arms a newborn infant.

"What are you doing!" the three of them cried. "Why would you put to death our own dear sister who has done nothing to deserve it? Better burn our stepmother! She is a witch, and she threw out the newborn babies who would have died if we had not found them and cared for them."

At this the princess's eyes filled with tears, and she said that it was because of the love she bore her brothers that she had kept silent for so long.

The witch was seized and cast into the flames, and the king held a sumptuous feast to which he invited great numbers of people from far and near. I was there, too, I drank ale and wine, and all of it ran down this beard of mine and not a drop got into my mouth!

THE FOOL WHO PASTURED A HUNDRED RABBITS

Once upon a time there lived a king who had one daughter, and he said that he would only let her marry a man who was able to carry out three tasks set by himself even if that man should be the poorest in the kingdom. Many tried to carry out these tasks, but not one succeeded.

Now, quite close to the palace there lived a man of common birth who had three sons.

"I think I'll go and try to win the princess for myself," said the oldest and cleverest of the three, and off he went.

On the way he met an old man, a beggar, but did not so much as say "good morning" to him.

"Where are you going in such haste?" the beggar asked.

"It's none of your business!" the oldest son muttered and went on without stopping.

"Good fortune will not smile on you, my lad!" said the old man.

And as he said so it was, for the oldest and cleverest of the sons came back home with nothing to show for it.

The second son, who was a clever enough young man, too, and very sure that he would win the princess for himself, tried his luck next, but he came back home with nothing to show for it either.

Said the third and most foolish of the three sons:

"The older two tried their luck, so why shouldn't I! Perhaps I will be luckier than they."

"You fool!" said his father. "To try to do what your clever brothers could not do!"

But the fool would not listen to him and went to see the king.

He met the old beggar on the way, and taking off his hat, bowed to him and greeted him very politely indeed.

The old man asked the fool where he was going, and the fool told him where and hid nothing from him.

"Here is a whistle for you," the old man said. "You will be sent to pasture a hundred rabbits today and that is when you must blow it so that they all come running back to you."

The fool came into the palace and was ushered into the king's presence.

"Where is your daughter?" he asked. "I am very fond of pretty maids and would like to see if she is pretty or not."

The princess was sent for, and when he saw her the fool said:

"Never have I seen a prettier maid! I wish to marry her and will carry out any task you set me."

The king heard him out and told him to pasture a hundred rabbits, so the fool took them to the field and set them

free, and away they ran in all directions and were soon gone from sight. The fool now wanted to see if what the beggar had told him were true and if the rabbits would listen to him. He blew his whistle, and lo!–there they were, all of them, come back to him. He counted them and found that not one was missing.

"You may run where you please, rabbits, and nibble the grass, and when I need you I'll blow my whistle," said he.

Now, a man was there who saw it all, and he went and told the king all about it, and the king sent the queen to the fool for her to get him to give her one of the rabbits.

The queen dressed herself in a peasant woman's clothes, and hobbling slowly up to the fool, asked him to either sell or give her one of his rabbits.

"I can neither sell any of the rabbits nor let anyone have one for a gift, for they are not mine," the fool said.

But the queen would not let him alone and kept badgering him to give her one rabbit, just one!

Guessing who she was, the fool said that he would do as she asked if only she kissed him first. The queen was loath to do it, but seeing that she would not get the rabbit otherwise, gave him a hearty smack! Then she thrust the rabbit he gave her into a basket and went home, beside herself with joy at having, as she thought, twisted the fool round her little finger.

The fool waited till she was close to the palace and then he pulled out his whistle and blew it. And the same moment–rap-tap!–the rabbit pushed open the basket top with his head, jumped out and flew to the fool's side. As for the queen, she stood there with her mouth open and could not utter a word!

Evening came, the fool brought all the hundred rabbits back to the king, and the king told him to come to see him in the morning.

The next day, as he was on his way to the palace, the fool met the old beggar again who gave him a trumpet and

said that he was to blow upon it if it was horses he had to get together.

The fool came into the king's presence, and the king ordered him to take a hundred horses to pasture and to drive them all back into the stable again by evening.

The fool let the horses loose in the field and off they ran in all directions and were gone from sight. An hour went by, and the fool decided to get them together again. He blew upon the trumpet, and lo!—the horses came running, all the hundred of them, and stood round him.

The king tried to get the queen to go and coax the fool to give her a horse, but she would not, saying that horses kicked, that she was afraid of them and that he could very well go himself!

The king disguised himself so that it was hard to tell who he was, got on a donkey's back, and riding out to the field, asked the fool to sell him a horse.

"I can't sell any of them," the fool said.

"Well, can't you lend me one, then?"

"No."

"Then, perhaps, you can give me one?"

"Oh, all right, I'll do it, only you must lift your donkey's tail first and hold it that way a while."

The king tried to get out of it, but as nothing helped and he wanted the horse very badly, he lifted the donkey's tail and held it. The fool gave him the horse, and the king climbed on its back, rode it home and locked it up in the stable. And he was very pleased with himself, thinking, "I tricked the fool today, one horse will be missing by evening."

But the fool blew upon his trumpet, the horse heard him, and—crash!—it struck at the stable door, and the door flew off its hinges. The king heard the crash and rushed to the window, but all he saw was the tip of its tail as the horse galloped away down the road.

Evening came, the fool drove all the hundred horses home and locked them up in the stable.

On the third day the king gave the fool a sack and ordered him to keep filling it with lies and not stop till he himself told him to tie it.

The fool thrust his head into the sack and began talking nonsense and spinning all sorts of lies.

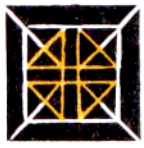
But words are not chaff, so talk ten to a dozen as he would, the sack remained empty.

The fool then bethought him of filling the sack with truth, and he began telling about how he had been out pasturing rabbits, how the queen had come to buy one of them and how he had only let her have one in return for a kiss. The king nearly fell off his feet laughing when he heard this.

Then the fool went on to tell about how he had been out pasturing horses and the king himself had come to beg him for one and how he had refused to let him have it till he had done as he said.

"Tie the sack, it's full!" the king cried, stopping the fool before he could say anything more.

And so that was how the fool got his way and married the princess.



SPRUCE, QUEEN OF THE GRASS SNAKES

Long, long ago, in times gone by, there lived an old man and an old woman. They had twelve sons and three daughters, the youngest of whom was called Spruce.

One summer evening the three daughters went for a bathe in a lake. They swam and splashed about, and having had their fill of it, climbed out on to the shore and reached for their clothes. Spruce looked, and there, coiled up in the sleeve of her shift, she saw a grass snake! What was she to do? Her older sister snatched up a stake in order to chase it out, but the snake turned to Spruce and said in a human voice:

"Spruce, my dear, promise to marry me and then I'll crawl out myself."

Now, this only made the tears well up in Spruce's eyes, for how could she marry a snake, so she cried angrily:

"Give me back my shift without more ado and crawl off to wherever it is you came from!"

But the grass snake stayed where he was and said as before:

"Promise to marry me and I'll crawl out."

Not knowing what to do, Spruce said that she would, and the grass snake at once crawled out of her shift and away.

Before three days had passed a great number of grass snakes came crawling into the old people's front yard, frightening everyone half out of their wits. They forced their way into the hut and told Spruce and her mother and father that they had come a-matchmaking.

At first the two old people were angered and amazed and would not hear of such a thing, but being faced with such vast numbers of snakes and learning that Spruce had promised to marry one, they were much troubled. Whether they wanted to or not, the youngest and prettiest of their daughters would be marrying a grass snake and there was little they could do about it.

However, they would not give their consent to the match all at once. They asked the snakes to wait in the hut and then stole off quietly to an old neighbour of theirs and told her all about it.

Said the neighbour:

"It's easy to fool the grass snakes, for they are trusting and good-natured. Dress up a goose in a bride's clothes and give it to the matchmakers instead of your daughter."

And that was just what they did. They dressed up a white goose in a bride's clothes, but no sooner had the matchmakers gone off with it than a cuckoo-bird sitting in a birch-tree called out after them:

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
You've been betrayed.
It's a goose you got
Instead of a maid."

The grass snakes flew into a rage, they threw away the goose, came back and demanded to be given the true bride. And Spruce's parents, at their old neighbour's advice, dressed a white ewe in bridal clothes and gave it to them.

But as the grass snakes started on their way the cuckoo-bird called out again:

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
They've tricked you anew.
Instead of a maid
You've been given a ewe!"

The grass snakes turned back, hissing with rage, and demanded to be given the true bride.

Instead, they got a white calf, but the cuckoo-bird told them that they had been tricked again, so back they came angrier than ever and threatened Spruce's parents with droughts and floods and hunger if they did not keep their word.

Her mother and father and her sisters and brothers wept over Spruce, but as there was nothing to be done, they dressed her up in bridal clothes and gave her to the grass snakes. Off went Spruce with the grass snakes, and the cuckoo-bird called out:

"Make haste and get home
Where you grass snakes belong:
For his bride has the groom
Been kept waiting too long."

On and on went Spruce and the snakes, and they came to the seashore. There a handsome youth met them and told Spruce that he was the grass snake she had found in the sleeve of her shift and promised to marry.

He carried Spruce to an island and then to the bottom of the sea where stood a rich palace. It was there they were married and there their wedding was held, and the feasting and marrymaking went on for three whole weeks.

The palace was filled with many lovely things, Spruce felt very happy there, and as the days went by she forgot her parents and her old home.

Nine years passed, and Spruce now had four children – three sons, Oak, Ash and Birch, and a daughter, the youngest of the four, whom she named Little Aspen.

One day, Spruce's oldest son, who had been running about and playing games, asked his mother where her parents were.

"Where do they live, Mother?" he asked. "I would so like to pay them a visit!"

It was only then that Spruce remembered her mother and father and her whole family and began wondering how they were and whether they were alive or not. She was filled with a great longing to see them and told her husband about it.

At first Grass Snake would not hear of letting her leave him, but she begged him to again and again, and he agreed at last.

"Only you must make me some yarn out of this tow first," said he, and giving her a bundle of tow, pointed at the spinning-wheel.

Spruce set to work, she spun day and night, but the bundle of tow grew no smaller. It came to her then that Grass Snake was trying to trick her and that this was magic tow.

So off she went to see an old woman, a sorceress, who lived close by.

"Please, mother, please, my dear, show me how to spin this tow," said she.

"You must light the stove and throw the tow in it," the old woman told her. "You will never be able to do anything with it otherwise."

Spruce came home, and lighting the stove as if to bake some bread, threw the tow into it. The tow flared up, and she saw a large toad jumping about in the flames, a silky thread running out of its fiery mouth.

The fire died and the toad vanished, but the silvery yarn remained.

Spruce hid the yarn and again asked her husband to let her go to visit her parents.

This time Grass Snake dragged a pair of iron shoes from under the bench.

"You can go as soon as you wear these out," said he.

Spruce put on the shoes and began walking and stamping about in them and trying to break them on sharp stones. But the shoes were thick and strong, and try hard as she would, she could not wear them out. In fact, there was no wearing them out at all, she now saw, they would last her all her life long.

So off Spruce went to ask the old sorceress for her counsel again.

"Take the shoes to a blacksmith, let him put them in a forge and heat them to white heat," the old woman said.

This Spruce did, and once the shoes were burnt through, she wore them out in three days and again began pleading with her husband to let her go to see her parents.

"Very well," said he. "Only bake a pie first, for how can you go visiting anyone without taking them something good to eat!"

But he had all the pots and pans in the palace put away that there might be none left for Spruce to mix the dough in.

Spruce cudgeled her brains for a long time trying to think how to bring water from a well without a pail and how to mix dough without a trough, but as there was nothing she could think of she went to see the old woman again.

"Do not try to draw water from a well but take a sieve, stop up the holes with leaven and then scoop up some water

with it from a stream. Mix the dough in the same sieve," the old woman told her.

Spruce did as she said. She mixed the dough, baked some pies and prepared to set off with her children. Grass Snake saw them off, he brought them out on to the shore and said:

"Spend no more than nine days in your parents' house. On the tenth day come out on to the shore with only the children and no one else and sing out:

'If alive you are, my husband,
White the foam will be and milky.
If 'tis dead you are, beloved,
Red the foam will be and bloody.'

If the sea boils up and the foam is milk-white, you will know that I am alive; if it boils up and the foam is blood-red, then you will know that I am dead. As for you, children, mind that you tell no one what you have just heard."

Having said this, he bade them goodbye and wished them a happy return.

Spruce's reunion with her parents was a joyous one. All her kinsfolk and their neighbours, too, came to have a look at her, and everyone wanted to know if she was happy with Grass Snake. She was kept busy answering their questions and telling them about her life, and they vied with each other in treating her to the best of food and drink.

The days flew, and Spruce did not notice how they passed.

In the meantime her parents and her twelve brothers and two sisters were racking their brains, trying to think how to keep her with them and not let her go back to Grass Snake. At last they decided to worm out of her children how she was to call him up from the bottom of the sea, for then they could lure him up out of the depths and kill him.

Spruce's brothers took Oak, her oldest son, to the forest, stood round him and began questioning him. But threaten him as they would, they could get nothing out of

him. So they let him go but warned him not to say a word to his mother about what they had asked him.

On the next day they took Ash to the forest and questioned him, and on the day after that, Birch, but learnt nothing from either of them.

At last they led the youngest of Spruce's children, Little Aspen, to the forest. At first she, too, would say nothing, but when they threatened to thrash her she blurted out what she knew.

Spruce's twelve brothers then took their scythes, went to the seashore and called out:

"If alive you are, my husband,
White the foam will be and milky.
If 'tis dead you are, beloved,
Red the foam will be and bloody."

Hearing them, Grass Snake swam up from the sea, and the twelve brothers fell on him with their scythes and killed him. After that they came back home, but they breathed not a word to Spruce about what they had done.

Nine days passed, and the time came for Spruce to leave for home. She bade all her kin goodbye, and going to the seashore with her children, called out:

"If alive you are, my husband,
White the foam will be and milky.
If 'tis dead you are, beloved,
Red the foam will be and bloody."

At this the sea darkened and boiled up, and Spruce saw that the foam cresting the waves was blood-red. And what did she hear all of a sudden but her husband's voice saying to her:

"It was your twelve brothers who killed me, and it was Little Aspen, our daughter, who betrayed me."

Spruce was filled with grief and horror. The tears poured from her eyes, and turning to Little Aspen, she said:

"You shall be a tree, one shy and timid,
Always shall you shiver, always tremble.
Always will the rain torment and tease you,
Always will the wind pull at your tresses."

Then, turning to her sons, she said:

"You shall be great trees, and Spruce, your mother,
By your side will stand and never leave you."

And as she said so it was.

Oak, Ash and Birch grew up to be tall and mighty trees and so they remain to this day, but Aspen trembles at the touch of the lightest breeze and all because she was so frightened of her uncles that she betrayed her own father.

THE GREATEST LOAFER OF THEM ALL

Once there lived a king whose only daughter, though fair and of a marriageable age, was still husbandless and in danger of remaining an old maid. Many suitors, rich and not so rich, brave and not so brave, learned men and fools, came to plead for the princess's hand but not one could please the king. A strange man was this king: in winter he rode about in a cart and in summer, in a sledge; he wore his clothes back to front, walked backward instead of forward, and his beard, so they said, grew not on his chin but on his forehead.

Now, the king had envoys sent out far and wide to seek a husband for his daughter, saying that he would only give

her in marriage and leave his kingdom, too, to the laziest man that could be found.

Three years passed, and the first envoy came back. The king sat there taking snuff and stroking the beard on his forehead and he asked the envoy whether he had seen anyone lazy enough to be allowed to marry the princess.

"I have walked the length and breadth of many a land and seen many cities and many people, too, Your Majesty," said the envoy, "but nowhere did I meet anyone so lazy as Stepas Dilde."

"Who is this Stepas Dilde? Tell me about him!" said the king sternly. For, you see, he was a true king, and kings are always stern.

"He is a most remarkable man, Your Majesty. I met him by the wayside, and he had one leg stuck in a pool of mud and the other raised over a bridge. I asked him what he was waiting for and he said that he had been standing like that for over two months because he was too lazy to pull his leg out of the mud."

"A true loafer!" the king agreed, and he gestured to his scribes to jot down the man's name.

In the meantime the second envoy had also returned.

"I have climbed many mountains and crossed many rivers during my travels, Your Majesty," said he, "and met many people too, but I particularly remember one of them, a man so lazy that I am sure you will find no one more suitable to be your son-in-law."

"Tell me about him!" said the king, sneezing loudly.

"Well, Your Majesty, he lives in a village and has grown himself such a long beard and moustache that they have cloaked the whole village like rain clouds. A stork has made a nest in one of his whiskers, and a family of ants have built an ant hill in the other. I asked him why he had let his moustache and beard grow to such a length but he was too lazy to reply. The people there told me that he had not shaved for twenty-four years."

"A droll fellow!" said the king. "Does he ever scratch his beard or is he too lazy to do even that?"

"All he does is scratch, Your Majesty," the envoy said. "Also, he picks up a pebble now and again and throws it at the crows who perch on his whiskers."

The king smiled and waved his hand, bidding his scribes jot down what the second envoy had said.

Meanwhile the third envoy had arrived and was awaiting his turn in the royal anteroom. He was ushered into the king's presence, and after bowing to the king and lauding his wisdom, said:

"I have seen so many interesting things during my travels, Your Majesty, that it would be enough to fill ten books. But nothing and no one struck me so much as a man I met, a loafer who hasn't his equal on earth and who, I feel sure, is truly worthy of becoming your son-in-law."

"Out with it, then, tell us about him!" said the king, brightening.

"So lazy is this man, Your Majesty, that he has not been out of his house in fourteen years. All he does is sit at the table and offer advice to his family. Once, just as I arrived, his house caught fire, but he did not so much as stir. His clothes began to smoulder and his moustache and beard to burn, and still he kept hoping that the fire would die out of itself. In the end, they dragged him out of the house by force. A good thing, too, or he would have burnt to death!"

"A rare case. Let him be crowned with the Wreath of the Grand Loafer!" the king exclaimed, and hearing that the fourth envoy had returned, he bade his servants show him in.

Having prostrated himself before the king and kissed the hem of his mantle, the fourth envoy wiped his face and proceeded to tell his story.

"O Your Royal Majesty, O Wisdom and Goodness!" he began. "You can put me in fetters and let me be torn by wild

beasts if you have heard anything to equal that which I am about to tell you. I crossed many seas and climbed many mountains during my travels and I saw just about everything there is to see, but nothing and no one so amazed me as the great loafer of the Land of Idlers."

"What is he famed for?" asked the king, winding one of his whiskers round his finger.

"You see, Your Majesty, he has been lying under the same tree in his kitchen garden for sixteen years, waiting for a turnip or a carrot to grow up in front of his nose. All about him and even on his nose and forehead little yellow turnips have sprung up, but being too lazy to move a finger, he never touches them. He eats nothing save an apple or a plum that happens to drop into his mouth."

"Does that kind of life please him?" the king asked.

"Very much, Your Majesty! I had a long talk with him and he said he had everything one could wish for, but would have liked something sweet, like an apple or a pear, to grow up under his nose."

"A rare loafer, indeed!" agreed the king. "And a learned and patient one as well. I wonder what my last envoy will have to tell me."

The king had just gestured to his scribes to write down what the fourth envoy had said when the fifth envoy burst into the throne room.

"You look excited, my man," said the king. "I suppose you have seen many wonders. Come, then, tell us about them!"

"O great and mighty king!" the man began. "I have seen what your other envoys have seen, but I doubt that they have seen what it has fallen to my lot to see. After three years of travels and many narrow escapes from death, I arrived in a certain land and there learned of the existence of a loafer like no other. Some think him dead, some, living, some believe him to be a saint and some don't know what to believe. I have seen this loafer with my own eyes. He sits on a hillock, has not stirred for seventy years, and swallows nest

under his chin and behind his ears. He has stopped up his ears with cotton, for he is too lazy to use them, and has thrust out his tongue and tied a large stone to its tip because he is too lazy to talk. He eats nothing at all and lives on air, for he is too lazy to stretch out his hand for the food even when it is brought him. About ten years ago he moved his lips, and that was when those who saw him knew him to be alive."

"The very man to be my son-in-law!" the king cried, and rewarding his envoys richly, he ordered the wedding to be held without delay and sent his best coach for the greatest loafer of them all.

The loafer married the princess and in due time became king. They say that he made a most excellent king, for after a few years of his reign his subjects turned into even greater loafers than he himself was.

WHAT A LORD'S PROMISES ARE WORTH

In a certain land there lived a lord who was a great cheat. He was always fooling his workmen and robbing them, and to one of them, a cheerful, highspirited youth, he had not paid his wages for three years on end.

Now, this young workman was walking along the river bank one day when he met a man coming toward him.

"Where have you been?" the workman asked.

"Where the road begins," the man replied.

"Did you see the floating stone?"

"I did. It goes drifting along and never sinks and neither do the millstones lying on top of it."

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"Good! I can see you're a bright lad, so let's be friends. You and I will go to see that devil of a lord together. I'll go in first and you stand outside and listen to what he and I talk about. Then you'll know what to say to him later," the workman said.

And he went to the lord's house followed by his new friend.

"You haven't paid me my wages for three years, Your Honour," he said to the lord. "Can't you give me some beer at least?"

"I have no beer," the lord replied. "There's been a poor crop of barley this year."

This did not daunt the workman who knew how stingy the lord was.

"I recently paid a visit to my kinsmen who work on one of the estates near here," said he, "and you should see the barley they grow there! One ear of it is enough to make twelve barrelfuls of beer."

"What!" the lord cried. "I'll send one of my servants to see if this is true."

This he did, and the first person the servant met on the way was the workman's new friend.

"Where have you been, my good fellow?" he asked.

"The very place you are bound for."

"How many barrels of beer did they brew this year?"

"I don't know, I wasn't there when they were brewing it, but I did see the barley being harvested. It took ten men three days to cut down one ear, and it was axes they were using."

The servant gave the man ten copper pieces and asked him to come with him and tell the lord all about it.

The man agreed and they went back together.

"Is it true about the barley?" asked the lord of the servant.

"It is indeed, sir. This man here will bear me out."

 The lord was in a fix and he knew it. Wanting to be rid

of the workman, he said to him:

"Come in a year. I will pay what I owe you in cabbage."

The workman went away, but when the year was up he dressed his friend in a woman's clothes and went with him to see the lord, himself going on ahead and his friend following him.

"I've come to get my cabbage, Your Honour," said he to the lord.

"I have no cabbage, we've had a poor crop of it this year," the lord replied.

"Well, where I've just been, they had so rich a crop of it that they shredded twelve barrelfuls out of a single head."

"What!" the lord cried. "I'll send one of my servants to see if this is true."

This he did, and the first person the servant met on the way was the workman's friend dressed in a woman's clothes.

"Where have you been?" the servant asked.

"The place you are bound for."

"Had they a good cabbage crop this year?"

"I don't know, for I wasn't there when the cabbage was being salted. But what I did see was that they were using twelve horses to cart away one cabbage stump."

"What did they want it for?"

"To make a bridge. It was just big enough to span a river."

"Here are ten copper pieces for you. Come with me to see my master and tell him all about it," the servant said.

And back he went to the lord's house.

"Is it true they had as rich a crop of cabbage as the workman said?" the lord asked him.

"It is indeed, sir. Here is a woman who has just been there and will bear me out."

The lord turned to the workman.

"All right," said he. "Come back next year and perhaps

the hens will be laying well. Then I'll pay what I owe you in eggs."

The workman went away, and he and his friend had a hard time of it all winter.

Then spring came, and they went to see the lord again, the workman going on ahead, and his friend, a beard pasted to his chin, following.

"How are your hens laying, Your Honour?" the workman asked.

"Badly, very badly, not an egg did they lay. But that, I suppose, was because I had nothing to feed them with," the lord said.

"Well, I've been to a farm where they feed hens with stars."

"What!" the lord cried. "I'll send my servant to see if this is true or not."

This he did, and the first person the servant met on the way was the workman's friend.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

"The place you are bound for."

"Did you see anyone there feeding hens with stars?"

"No. But what I did see was three men rolling one egg on to a frying pan."

The servant gave the man ten copper pieces, bade him repeat what he had just said to the lord and led him to the lord's house.

"Is it true about the hens?" the lord asked.

"Indeed it is, sir! They feed the hens with stars and the hens lay eggs so large that it is all three men can do to lift one. I have a man here with me who has just been there and will bear me out."

The lord saw that he would be hard put to it to get rid of his workman.

"Come back in a year and tell me of the greatest fool you will have met. Then I'll pay what I owe you," he said.

 The workman went away, he had a hard time of it, and no

sooner had the year passed than back he came again to see the lord.

"Well, have you seen many fools?" the lord asked.

"I have been going from place to place, and I have seen quite a few of them," the workman said. "But the greatest of them was a man who had been sitting on the edge of a forest for ten years. His beard was so long that it trailed over the ground, and there were swallows nesting in it and behind his ears. All who saw him thought that there had never been anyone so foolish!"

"Why does he sit there?"

"Because he hopes his master will take pity on him and pay him his wages at last. He hasn't been paid in ten years."

"Why does everyone think him a fool?"

"Because he hasn't lost hope that a lord will treat a peasant justly."

At this, the lord, who knew who his workman was hinting at, bade his servants drive him out of his house and off his lands.

A lord's promises are empty promises, and to expect justice from a lord is as to expect the litter in a cowhouse to be downy and soft.

STRAKALAS AND MAKALAS

Strakalas and Makalas were neighbours. They got on well together and were friends from their earliest years. If one of them killed a pig on a holiday or marked a christening or some such event he never forgot to invite the other. It was with good reason that the villagers said that if Strakalas were made king, Makalas would be sure to share his throne.

But what was bad was that the two friends were as stubborn as mules and rare braggarts to boot! Should Strakalas, without stopping to think, remark that in America cows had wings and flew like birds he'd never go back on it, no matter

what you did, but keep repeating it till doomsday. And should Makalas declare that in Turkey drills and hammers grew in the fields he'd insist it was so even if you threatened to kill him for it.

One day Strakalas and Makalas went to the forest for some firewood.

"I see you have a new axe, neighbour," Makalas said.

"That's so!" said Strakalas. "And the like of it has never been seen here before. Not only will it cut bread but split stones as well."

"Catch me believing that!" said Makalas. "And, anyway, there's no better axe than mine. Old as it is, no other, even if a brand-new one, can compare with it. Just pass it once over a whetstone, and you can shave with it!"

"Well, I don't need a whetstone to sharpen my axe. All I need do is blow on it once!" said Strakalas.

"One touch of my axe is enough to bring down a tree!" bragged Makalas.

"It's no match for mine, all the same," Strakalas said, holding his ground. "I have only to raise it, and it'll split a birch splits in two". It happened only yesterday when I went to chop some trees."

The two friends walked on and soon came to a farm with some apple-trees growing very close to the road. Without thinking what he was doing, Makalas flourished his axe and brought down one of the trees.

"See? What did I tell you!" he cried. "All I did was raise my axe and down came the tree."

At this, Strakalas, too, waved his axe and brought down two apple-trees.

"There you are – two trees felled at a stroke!" said he.

But now the owner of the orchard and his sons came running out of the house. They took away their axes from Strakalas and Makalas and beat them to within an inch of their lives.

Autumn came. Strakalas and Makalas cleaned their guns and went hunting. They had only just set out when Strakalas said:

"Let's go after a bear, neighbour! We could kill one easily."

"One? Humph! We could kill five!" Makalas returned. "I remember in my young years I had only to spend an hour in the woods to come back with a dozen rabbits."

"Well, when I was young," Strakalas put in, not to be outdone, "I'd shoot so many rabbits every time I went hunting that I had to hire a cart to bring them all home."

"Two carts were never enough for all the rabbits I used to shoot," Makalas said. "I'd only take the fattest and leave the rest, even if there were two or three hundred of them, to the crows."

"I once killed fourteen ducks with one grain of small shot!" Strakalas declared.

"Is that all?" Makalas rejoined, not in the least put out. "Do you know what happened to me once? I ran out of all my small shot, so I used a horseshoe nail instead, fired my gun once, and—hey, presto!—killed two rabbits on the spot and nailed a fox's tail to a tree at the same time."

"That's nothing!" said Strakalas. "Just last year I loaded my gun with pepper, bay leaves and salt and downed seven ducks at a single shot, and, what's more, all of them were already plucked and ready for roasting."

"That's something for a cook to do rather than a hunter, neighbour," said Makalas. "What a true hunter needs is a keen eye. Now, I could hit a hat on a man's head from a mile away."

"Since you mention it, I could do that with my eyes shut. If you are as good a shot as you say, let's see you hit a button."

"What's a button!" said Makalas. "I wouldn't miss a fly at that distance."

 Boasting loudly, the two came up to a farmhouse. In the

front yard, pillows and clothing had been hung on a line for airing.

Strakalas raised his gun, took careful aim and hit a sheepskin.

"See that?" said he.

Makalas followed suit. His bullet passed through a pillow.

"I told you I could hit a fly!" he cried.

Hearing the shots, the farmer and his friends came running out of the house. Seeing what Strakalas and Makalas had done, they went after them, caught them, took away their guns and thrashed them to within an inch of their lives.

Summer came, and Makalas went out into the field to cut the rye. He was hard at it when Strakalas appeared.

"What's your hurry, neighbour?" he asked. "Let the rye dry. Your bread will be all the softer for it."

"There's no time to be lost," said Makalas. "It's going to rain. See those clouds?"

"No, I don't. There's not a sign of rain," Strakalas said.

"The crows are cawing, and that's a sure sign of it," Makalas returned.

"Pooh! I haven't seen my rooster taking a dust bath and that means no rain yet a while."

"You and your rooster!" Makalas said. "It's going to rain, I tell you, I feel it in my bones."

"In your bones! I know we'll have fine weather for another three days, and that's all there is to it."

"And I know it's going to rain."

They kept it up till evening, and Makalas's rye was left in the field.

On the next day it was Strakalas who insisted it would rain and Makalas who said it would not.

They went on like that for several more days till all of a sudden down came the rain! It poured steadily for nearly a week, but as soon as it stopped the two friends began arguing about the weather again and were still at it when

the rain came down anew. By that time their rye had put forth shoots and both were left without bread.

In the spring Strakalas's hayloft was hit by lightning and caught fire. The fire spread to Makalas's storeroom. Their neighbours rushed to help them and would have put out the fire had not the two friends begun arguing again, Makalas saying that a fire was best quenched with sour milk, and Strakalas, that sour milk was as nothing compared to sand. While they were at it their houses and everything else they had burnt down to the ground.

Strakalas and Makalas were left without a roof over their heads. They each made themselves a large sack and went begging for alms.

And to this day that is how the two braggarts make their living.

THE SIX TOOTHLESS MEN AND A SQUINTEYED ONE

In the village of Shortlegs, at the foot of Mount Hammer, not far from Lake Spoon, there lived six Toothless Men and a Squinteyed one.

The six Toothless Men did not get on with Squinteye.

One day they were crossing a meadow, and seeing Squinteye's bull, fell on him and killed him.

When his bull failed to return that night Squinteye went to look for him. He looked and he looked and he found him lying in the field, dead. He skinned the bull, put the skin in a cart and brought it home.

On the next day his wife and he drove to a fair. There

he helped his wife get into the bull's skin and told her what he wanted her to do.

As soon as enough people had gathered at the fair, Squinteye sprang up on to his cart.

"Watch this, good folk!" he cried. "When the wife is inside, my bull sings and dances; when she is outside, he stands still. It's a bargain, so hurry and come up here!"

The people came running and stood round Squinteye.

"Dance for me, little bull!" said Squinteye.

The bull began to dance.

"Tell me what you had for breakfast today, little bull," said Squinteye.

"Stra-a-aw!.." the bull brought out.

A murmur passed over the crowd.

"A marvel!" they all cried.

A merchant now pushed his way to the cart. He did not bargain but bought the bull for a thousand gold pieces.

"What did you mean when you said that when the wife is inside, your bull sings and dances, and when she is outside, he stands still?" he asked of Squinteye.

"I'll show you what I meant," Squinteye said. And he bade his wife climb out of the bull's skin.

"There you are!" said he. "Now the bull can do nothing."

The merchant saw that he had been tricked, but there was no help for it, so off he went without another word.

The six Toothless Men heard of Squinteye's good fortune and came to see him.

"We heard that you have become very rich, that you rake in gold with a shovel," they said. "Tell us how this came about."

Squinteye scratched his head.

"You killed my bull because you wanted to harm me, but you helped me instead," he said. "For I skinned the bull and sold the skin at the fair for a thousand gold pieces."

The six Toothless Men went home, killed and skinned all of their bulls and on the next day took the skins to market.

Hearing the price they asked, a thousand gold pieces for a skin, the people there only laughed at them.

"You must be off your heads!" they said. "Has anyone ever heard the like of this – to ask a thousand gold pieces for a bull's skin and one full of holes at that!"

"Drive them out of here! They are making fun of us!" the tradesmen cried.

At this the six Toothless Men rolled up the skins and ran for their lives. They understood that Squinteye had tricked them and decided to revenge themselves on him.

They made a sack of leather, caught Squinteye, thrust him into it, and tying the sack, dragged it to the river.

Said the oldest of the six:

"Let's rest and have something to eat. We can drown Squinteye later."

So they left the sack on the bridge and went to a tavern.

Left to himself, Squinteye began rolling and kicking about in the sack and shouting very loudly indeed:

"Let me out and there's something I'll show you! Let me out and there's something I'll show you!"

An old shepherd heard his cries, and taking pity on him, untied the sack.

"Now show me what it is you promised to," he said.

"Have patience, I will soon enough," Squinteye said.

He rooted out an old tree-stump, thrust the stump and a large stone into the sack and tied it. After that he and the shepherd hid under the bridge.

The six Toothless Men were soon back, and seizing the sack, flung it into the river.

"Take that, you trickster!" they cried. "Take that and get what you deserve!"

And Squinteye, who was alive and well, jumped out from under the bridge, ran to where the shepherd's flock was grazing and began tending it.

At sight of him the six Toothless Men opened their mouths in amazement.

"Where have you come from?" they asked. "Why, we threw you into the river not a minute ago."

"I don't know where it is I have been myself," Squinteye told them. "Never have I seen anything so beautiful as the river bottom! I thought I was in paradise. But I liked the sheep best, that's why I brought them with me."

"Is there at least one such sheep left down there?" the six Toothless Men asked.

"Hundreds of them," said Squinteye. "Here, I'll show you if you don't believe me."

And the six Toothless Men following him, he drove the flock of sheep on to the bridge.

"See how many sheep are still there!" said he, pointing at the reflection in the water.

"Yes, yes!" the six Toothless Men cried.

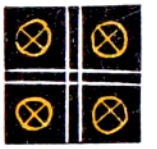
They bent over the railing the better to see, and the oldest of them jumped over it and into the water. Hearing him gurgling and gasping, the other five thought that he was calling to the sheep.

"He'll get the fattest ones for himself!" they cried and jumped into the water after him.

For a full hour they floundered about in the river and nearly drowned before managing to climb out on to the bank.

And from that time on the six Toothless Men left Squinteye alone.

LATVIAN FAIRY TALES



THE BRAVE ROOSTER

Once upon a time there lived in Vidzeme a poor man. He had nothing to his name and not even a roof of his own over his head and lived in a little bathhouse which he rented from a lord. And of course that, as everyone knows, is a poor sort of life! For whenever the lord wanted a bath, be it summer or winter, out the poor man had to go into the street!

Now, the poor man had a rooster who was like a son to him. To talk to this rooster was his one pleasure in life.

The lord treated the poor man badly, worked him nearly to death, and finally drove him out of the bathhouse together

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with his rooster. The poor man felt very sad, for there was no one to stand up for him, and he burst into tears.

The lord's cruelty made the rooster very angry.

"Do not be grieved," said he to his master. "I'll go to see the lord about this myself!"

And off he made for the lord's house.

On the way he met a bear.

"Hullo there, bear!" he said.

"Hullo, rooster!" said the bear. "Where are you going?"

"To see the lord and give him a piece of my mind for having treated my master so badly."

"I'm coming with you!" said the bear.

On they went together and they met a wolf.

"Hullo, wolf!" the rooster said.

"Hullo, rooster!" said the wolf. "Where are you going?"

"To see the lord and give him a piece of my mind for having treated my master so badly."

"I'm coming with you!" said the wolf.

They went on together, and by and by a hawk came flying toward them.

"Hullo, hawk!" the rooster said.

"Hullo, rooster!" said the hawk. "Where are you going?"

"To see the lord and give him a piece of my mind for having treated my master so badly."

"I'm coming with you!" said the hawk.

They came to the lord's house, and the bear, the wolf and the hawk hid behind some bushes while the rooster flew up on to the gate and sang out:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! Listen to me and beware, lord! You drove my master out of the bathhouse, and I'll drive you out of your house and off your land for having treated him so badly."

Now, the lord was sitting on the terrace having his coffee, and so angry did the rooster's song make him that he ordered his servants to catch the rooster and throw him in the goose-house for the geese to nip to death. The ser-

vants caught the rooster and threw him in the goose-house, but the hawk flew in after him and killed all the geese.

In the morning the rooster flew out of the goose-house and on to the gate and sang out again:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! Listen to me and beware, lord! You drove my master out of the bathhouse and I'll drive you out of your house and off your land for having treated him so badly."

Now, the lord was sitting on the terrace just then waiting for his morning coffee. So enraged was he that he ordered the rooster to be thrown in the cowhouse for the cows to gore to death. The servants caught the rooster and threw him in the cowhouse.

"Well, I suppose it's my turn now!" the wolf said, and in he slipped into the cowhouse after the rooster.

In the morning the farmhands came into the cowhouse and what did they see but all the cows lying there dead, killed by the wolf. And as for the rooster, he was alive and well, and flying up on to the gate again, sang out:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! Listen to me and beware, lord! You drove my master out of the bathhouse and I'll drive you out of your house and off your land for having treated him so badly."

Now, this made the lord so angry that he did not even touch his coffee. He ordered his servants to throw the rooster in the stable for the horses to trample to death, and the servants rushed to do his bidding.

"Well, I suppose it's my turn now," the bear said.

And in he rushed into the stable after the rooster.

In the morning the farmhands came into the stable, and what did they see but all the horses lying there dead, killed by the bear.

The rooster flew out of the stable and on to the gate and sang out as he had before:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! Listen to me and beware, lord! You drove my master out of the bathhouse and I'll drive you

out of your house and off your land for having treated him so badly!"

The lord, who was on the terrace, could not keep his seat. Up he jumped and down he ran into the yard, and he bade his servants catch the rooster and kill him. And the rooster began calling to the bear, the wolf and the hawk to make haste and come to his aid.

They came running, and, oh, what a battle was fought in the yard! The rooster pecked, the bear mauled, the wolf tore, and the hawk clawed. Away helter-skelter ran the lord's servants, and so far did they go that they could not find their way back afterwards!

The rooster flew at the lord and pinned him to the ground.

"Choose!" he cried. "Either you die or agree to tend my pigs."

"I'd rather tend pigs than die any day!" said the lord.

At this the hawk flew to his nest, the wolf ran to the field to do whatever it was he had a mind to do, and the bear made off for the forest. And as for the rooster, he brought his master to the lord's house, they lived there together very happily, and the lord tended their pigs for them.

HOW THE BIRDS AND ANIMALS DUG A BED FOR THE DAUGAVA

Long, long ago all the birds and animals got together to dig a bed for the Daugava. They set to work, and the rabbit said that he would run on ahead and show them where the river bed was to be. This he did, but, like all rabbits, he ran in circles, and that is why there are so many loops and turns to the Daugava.

Just behind the rabbit came the mole, who worked hard and dug the first furrow. And he was richly rewarded for it, too, getting a coat of shiny black velvet that he wears to this day.

All the birds and animals did their bit. The only one who refused to do anything at all was the oriole.

"The water that falls from the sky is enough for me," she said. "I don't need the kind that flows over the ground."

Her friends took this badly. They talked it over and decided to punish her. From then on she was not to get any river water at all to drink and would have to make do with rain water.

So now you know why the oriole is always so thirsty in the dry season and we hear her calling:

"When's the rain coming? When's the rain coming?"

THE FROG THAT CAME FROM RIGA AND THE FROG THAT CAME FROM LIEPAJA

In olden times there lived two frogs, one of them in Riga and the other in Liepaja. Now, the one who lived in Liepaja decided to go and see what Riga was like, while the Riga frog told herself that it would be fun to see what Liepaja was like.

Off set the Liepaja frog on her way, on and on she hopped, and by and by she saw another frog hopping towards her.

"Where do you come from and where are you going?" asked the Liepaja frog.

"I come from Riga, and I am going to see what Liepaja is like," the Riga frog replied.

"Well, I come from Liepaja, and I am going to Riga to see what Riga is like."

They began talking among themselves and agreed that the way before them was long, that they had much to fear from storks and that it would not be easy to jump over the deep, waterlogged ruts in the roads.

"Look here," one of them said, "why don't we climb that hill there, stand up on our hind legs and see what Riga and Liepaja look like from its top! Then we won't need to walk all these weary miles from town to town."

No sooner said than done. They climbed the hill, stood up on their hind legs and looked over each other's shoulder.

Said the Riga frog when they had gazed their fill:

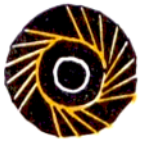
"Listen, sister, your Liepaja looks just like my Riga!"

"Yes, and your Riga looks just like my Liepaja!" the Liepaja frog returned.

"If that's the way it is, there's no need for us to go any further," the two of them decided.

But what they had quite forgotten was that their eyes were in the back of their heads, so that standing the way they had, they had been looking not at what lay ahead but at what lay behind them.

And so it is that the poor frogs do not know to this day that Riga and Liepaja are not the least bit alike.



THE KINDHEARTED LAD AND HIS FOUR FRIENDS

Once upon a time there lived a man and his son. One day it so happened that there was no bread left in the house, so the father gave the son a ruble for him to buy some. The son took the money and set off for the market.

He walked and he walked and what did he see but a peasant beating his dog so hard that it looked as if he meant to kill it.

Said the son, going up to him:

"Please don't beat the dog, peasant! I'll give you a ruble if you let it go."

To this the peasant agreed. He left the dog alone, and the son gave him the ruble and went home.

The father met him on the doorstep.

"Well, have you brought the bread?" he asked.

"No, I haven't," replied the son. "What's a ruble! I must have more money if you want me to buy bread."

But he kept the truth from his father and never told him what he had done with the money.

On the next day, as there was nothing at all to eat in the house, the father gave the son another ruble to buy bread with. The son took the money and set off for the market.

He walked and he walked and what did he see but the same peasant beating a mouse.

"Please don't beat the mouse, peasant!" he cried. "I'll give you a ruble if you let it go."

To this the peasant agreed. He left the mouse alone, and the son gave him the money and went home.

The father met him on the doorstep.

"Well, have you brought the bread?" he asked.

"No, I haven't," the son replied. "What's a ruble! I must have more money if you want me to buy bread."

There was nothing to be done, and the father and son were left hungry again.

On the third morning the father gave the son yet another ruble and told him to be sure to buy some bread this time, for there wasn't so much as a crumb in the house.

The son took the money and set off for the market.

He walked and he walked and what did he see but the selfsame peasant beating a cat. The sight was too much for him.

"Please don't beat the cat, peasant!" he cried. "I'll give you a ruble if you let it go."

To this the peasant agreed. He left the cat alone, and the son gave him the ruble and went home.

The father met him on the doorstep.

 "He's sure to have brought the bread this time," said

he to himself, but seeing the son coming up to him empty-handed, knew that this was not the case.

"Well, have you brought the bread?" he asked just to make sure.

"No, I haven't," the son replied. "What's a ruble! I must have more money if you want me to buy bread."

The father did not argue, and when morning came, gave him a ruble.

The son took the money and told himself that he would certainly buy some bread this time – he couldn't very well let his father starve!

He set off for the market, he walked and he walked, and what did he see but the selfsame peasant beating a snake.

"Please don't beat the snake, peasant!" he cried. "I'll give you a ruble if you let it go."

To this the peasant agreed. He left the snake alone, got the money, and went off with it laughing to himself, for wasn't this a foolish lad indeed – to pay a whole ruble just to save a snake's life!

As for the snake, so grateful was it to the son that it gave him a magic ring.

"Take this ring," it said, "and if ever you need anything, twist it round your finger, say what it is you want half under your breath, and you will have it. And if you need any bread, just knock the ring against a millstone, and you'll get more than your fill of it."

The son was overjoyed. He took the ring and hurried home with it.

The father met him on the doorstep.

"Well, have you brought the bread?" he asked.

"No," the son replied. "But now we'll have more than enough of it."

At this the father only stared, for where could the bread come from if there wasn't a crumb in the house!

But what was his wonder and surprise when the son

walked up to a millstone, knocked his ring against it and wished for some bread, for – lo and behold! – there before them lay loaves and loaves of it.

From that time on the father and son never wanted for anything, for the son had only to twist the ring on his finger, and whatever it was they needed they got.

They lived in this way for a time and had not a care in the world. Then one day the son said to himself:

"Wouldn't it be wonderful if the trees growing near our hut had leaves made of gold and diamonds!"

He twisted the ring on his finger, and the same moment all the leaves on the trees that grew near their hut turned into leaves of gold and diamonds.

Soon, rumour of it spread throughout the countryside, and the lord of the manor came to see if what was being said were true. Seeing that it was, he asked the son to cast a spell over his garden, too, so the trees in it would have gold and diamond leaves as they did in his. The son had nothing against it, and off he went with the lord to his castle.

He walked round the garden and twisted the ring on his finger, and the same moment all the leaves on the trees turned into gold and diamond leaves. But the lord's wife had noticed the ring and had seen him twist it. She told the lord about it, and he asked the son not to go back home that day but to spend the night in the castle.

To this the son agreed, but no sooner had he fallen asleep than the lord's wife tiptoed up to him, and not knowing that at her touch the ring would lose all its magic powers, slipped it off his finger.

Morning came, and everyone saw that the gold and diamond leaves were gone and the trees were just as they had ever been. The lord was very angry, and saying that the son was nothing but a common swindler, had him seized and thrown in a dungeon. The son was sentenced to death and was to hang on the following day.

What was the poor lad to do? The walls of the dungeon were thick and so were the doors, and as he did not have the ring any more, there seemed to be no way of escaping death.

But the mouse, the cat and the dog decided to try and save their friend, and as soon as it was night, the mouse and the cat got into the castle, crept into the bed-chamber of the lord's wife and sat there watching her.

Now, fearing that someone would steal the ring, the lord's wife had been keeping it in her mouth, and as soon as she was in bed and asleep, the mouse, seeing that her mouth was open, slipped the tip of its tail into it. The lord's wife coughed, the ring rolled out of her mouth and fell on the floor, and the cat snatched it up, darted out of the door and rushed off with it. In the meantime the dog had been scratching away at the wall and had made a hole in it, and the cat now wriggled through the hole into the dungeon and gave the ring to the son. The son was overjoyed. He slipped the ring on his finger, twisted it and wished himself out of the dungeon.

The same moment the walls parted, and the son stepped out of the dungeon to freedom. There was nothing for him to fear any more, for now that he had the ring the lord could do him no harm.

So he and his father began living together again in their hut and were very, very happy.

THE PALACE OF THE CATS

A certain lord had three sons two of whom were clever lads and the third, the youngest, a fool. That is the way it used to be of old in all the lords' families.

The lord had a good life, but the years passed and at last old age crept up on him. Meanwhile, his sons had grown to manhood, so he had to decide which of them was to be his heir. Now, this started the two clever sons arguing.

"It is s I who should get the house and land!" said one of them.

"No, I!" said the other.

But the fool did not join in the argument and only laughed at his clever brothers.

"The house and land ought to be mine by rights," he said, "but just to settle it in a brotherly way, you can have them. All I want is the old bay horse and the plank cart."

But the clever brothers could not agree among themselves, and it looked as if it would come to a fight.

The old lord listened to them quarrelling and saw that nothing good would come of it. So he called his sons to his side and said:

"You'll never settle your differences in this way, my sons. Better go and look for a flowered kerchief. Whoever brings me the prettiest one will get the house and land."

The sons knew that it was time to stop arguing and do their father's bidding.

On the very next day the two clever brothers prepared to set out in search of the kerchiefs. They took the best horses and plenty of money and they rode out of the yard through two different gates. But the fool stayed home and never turned a hair.

"Don't you want to go and seek your fortune, too, my son?" the father asked.

"Let my elder brothers look for the kerchiefs and then perhaps they'll leave me nothing to look for," replied the fool with a laugh.

To this his father found nothing to say.

Some time passed, and when only four days were left before the brothers were due to return, the fool harnessed the old bay horse to a plank cart and rode off through the third gate.

He rode and he rode and he did not know where to go. So he slackened the reins and decided to let his horse have its head.

Some time passed, they came to a large forest, and the fool saw that there ahead of him was a fork in the road, a wide path leading to the left and a narrow one to the right. The

fool wanted to follow the wide path, but no sooner did his horse reach the place where the road branched off than it turned to the right.

"Let it! I don't care where I go," said the fool to himself and rode on.

Night soon came, and there was dense forest around him with not a gleam of light anywhere. The fool was beginning to be cross with his horse for having brought them to where they were in danger of being eaten up by wolves, when, riding a little way further, he saw a light ahead. On he rode and soon came to a large palace, at whose gate, showing their teeth and looking very fierce, sat two huge cats. In his fright, the fool did not know what to do at first, but then, telling himself that the wolves would eat him up anyway, so he might as well risk being torn up by the cats, he walked past them through the gate. At this the cats stopped showing their teeth, and instead of falling on him, began rubbing themselves against his legs.

He came into the courtyard and was met by a great number of cats and tomcats who—o wonder of wonders!—all spoke like people do. They at once led the fool into the palace and his horse to the stable and tried to do everything they could to please them.

In the morning the fool prepared to set out on his way, but the cats surrounded him and begged him to stay with them a little while longer. This the fool would have been glad to do but he knew that he had only three days left in which to bring home a kerchief more beautiful than the ones his brothers might find. He told the cats about it, and the white cat said when she had heard him out:

"That's a trifling matter, my lad. Stay with us another three days and you'll have the kerchief to take with you and whatever else you might wish for besides."

The fool spent three days in the cats' palace and he felt like a king. The cats fed him and put him to bed and carried out his every wish.

On the evening of the third day they harnessed the fool's horse to the plank cart, and the white cat gave the fool a nut.

"Go home in peace," said she. "Everything will be well, only mind that you don't crack the nut on the way."

The fool got into his cart and away he rode in a cloud of dust!

And as for the two clever brothers, they were already back home by then and showing their father the kerchiefs they had brought. The kerchiefs were indeed beautiful, though not as beautiful as they might have been, but the brothers and their horses were hard to recognise, so wasted and worn were they.

The fool rode into the yard, and his horse pranced about in the liveliest fashion, and he himself looked hale and fit and not in the least worn out.

Said his father:

"It looks as if you've enjoyed yourself wherever it is you've been, my son, but whether or not you got a good farewell gift remains to be seen."

The fool laughed.

"I've had a wonderful time and I've brought a rich gift with me, too!" he said.

He took the nut the white cat had given him out of his pocket, flipped it lightly, and lo!—a kerchief so beautiful that it seemed to set the whole chamber alight appeared before him.

The two clever brothers were thunderstruck at the sight.

Said the father:

"Well, my sons, you can see for yourselves that it is the fool to whom my house and land must go, for he has brought a kerchief so beautiful that its match cannot be found anywhere in the world."

The kerchief was indeed one to feast the eyes on, and the clever brothers could not find fault with it, but they refused to give up the house and land to the fool.

"Well, if I can't have them, I can't," said the fool.

"Of course, they belong to me by rights, but since you want them so much you can divide them between you. Just leave me the old bay horse and the plank cart."

Day and night the clever brothers were at it, arguing, but divide the house and land between them they could not.

"It is I who should get the house and land!" cried one of them.

"No, I!" cried the other.

The father tried to make peace between them time and again, but all in vain.

One day he called his three sons to his side again and said:

"Whichever of you gets the house and land has to marry in any case. So set off now and seek for wedding dresses for your brides. The house and land will go to him who brings the most beautiful dress."

The clever brothers took their best horses and plenty of money and away they rode through two different gates. But the fool never turned a hair.

"Don't you want to go and seek your fortune, too, my son?" asked his father.

Said the fool in reply as he had the first time:

"Let my elder brothers look for the dresses and then perhaps I'll have nothing to look for."

To this the father found nothing to say.

Time passed, and when only four days were left before the brothers were due to return, the fool harnessed his old bay horse to the plank cart and rode off through the third gate.

Once again he was at a loss where to go. But since the horse had turned out to be cleverer than he the first time he felt that it ought to be given its head this time, too. He slackened the reins, and at once it quickened its pace and went so fast that it was all he could do to hold on.

Toward evening they rode up to the palace of the cats again, and there, by the palace gate, sat the two huge cats just

as they had the first time, showing their teeth and looking fiercely at him. But the fool was not afraid. Out he sprang from the cart and made straight for the palace.

This time, too, a great number of cats, large and small, came running up to him. They welcomed the fool as if he were a king and led him into the palace and his horse to the stable.

In the morning the fool prepared to set off on his way again, but the cats surrounded him on all sides and begged him to stay with them a little longer. This the fool would have been glad to do were it not that he had only three days left in which to bring home a wedding dress more beautiful than any his clever brothers might find. He told the cats about it, and the white cat said when she had heard him out:

"That's a trifling matter, my lad. Stay with us another three days, and you'll have anything you wish for to take home with you."

The fool was nothing loath, and so he spent another three days in the palace.

On the evening of the third day the cats harnessed the old bay horse to the plank cart, and the white cat gave the fool a little box, saying in parting:

"Go home in peace and all will be well, but mind you don't open the box on the way."

The fool got into the cart and away he rode in a cloud of dust!

Now, the two clever brothers were home by then and showing their father the wedding dresses they had brought. And the father looked at the dresses and saw that they were beautiful indeed, though not as beautiful as they might have been, but his sons and their horses were so wasted and worn that it was hard to recognise them.

Just then the fool rode into the yard in his plank cart, and so fast did he go that the gate shook.

Said the father:

"It looks like you've enjoyed yourself, my son, but

whether or not you were given a good farewell gift remains to be seen."

The fool gave a laugh.

"I've had a wonderful time and I've brought a rich gift with me, too!" said he, and opening the box, brought out the dress.

Seeing it, the father and the two clever brothers could hardly believe their eyes, for it was more beautiful than any a princess might have.

Said the father to his clever sons:

"Well, my sons, you can see for yourselves that it is the fool to whom the house and land must go, for he has brought a wedding dress that which there is no finer in the world."

The clever brothers agreed that the dress was indeed one to feast the eyes on, but they would not hear of giving up the house and land to the fool.

The fool did not try to argue with them.

"The house and land are mine by rights," he said, "but you can have them to divide as you will between you. All I want is the old bay horse and the plank cart."

The two clever brothers began arguing, they argued day and night, but divide the house and land between them they could not.

"It is I who should have them!" cried one of them.

"No, I!" cried the other.

The father listened to them for a time but said nothing for he hoped that they would settle the matter quietly between them. But seeing that it might come to a fight before long, he called all the three sons to his side and said:

"Enough! Go, all of you, and let each find himself a bride."

After that there was nothing the brothers could do but set out to seek brides for themselves. The two clever brothers took the best horses and plenty of money and away they rode through two different gates. But the fool never turned a hair. The days passed, and there he was, still at home. The father felt that it

was high time for him to be setting off but the fool made no move to do so.

At last the father could contain himself no longer.

"Don't you want to go and seek your fortune, too, my son?" he asked.

But the fool only laughed.

"Let my elder brothers look for their brides, and then perhaps I won't need to look for mine so long," said he.

The father found nothing to say to this.

Then, just four days before his brothers were due to return, the fool harnessed his little old bay horse to the plank cart again and away he rode through the third gate.

"Now, where shall I go?" thought he. "The cats gave me the kerchief and wedding dress, but where would they find me a bride, and a beautiful one at that! Oh, well, since my horse proved to be cleverer than I both times, it can have its head now, too."

And the horse trotted on even faster than before and turned down the selfsame road that led to the selfsame palace. Reaching the palace, it stopped by the gate where, just as they had before, sat the two huge cats, showing their teeth and looking very fierce.

"This is where the horse brought me, so this is where I'll stay," said the fool to himself, and he made for the palace.

Seeing him, the cats came running up from all sides just as they had before. They gave him a royal welcome and led his horse to the stable.

That evening the fool walked all around the palace and looked in every corner, hoping to find at least one human being living here among all these cats. But search as he might, he found no one—no one, that is, except more cats. Grieved, he waited till morning and then prepared to take his leave. But the cats surrounded him on all sides and asked him why he was so sad, and he told them that it was because his brothers might well have found brides for themselves already

while he had not so much as laid eyes on his.

Said the white cat:

"Oh, that's a trifling matter, my lad. Stay with us another three days and you'll have the most beautiful bride of all to take home with you and anything else you may wish for besides."

The fool was nothing loath, so he spent another three days with the cats, and they attended to all his needs and tried to please him just as if he were a king.

On the evening of the third day it was time for the fool to be setting out for home, but the cats would not let him go and asked him to spend one last night with them, for, said they, how could he take his bride through such a dense forest, and in the middle of the night, too!

There was nothing for it, so the fool stayed in the palace for another night.

But, oh, what a fright he had because of it! He went to bed in the evening just as he had the first two times, but woke up around midnight to hear the wind howling wildly in the tower. It howled for a long, long time, and then suddenly a whirlwind so fierce tore through the palace that the earth quaked and shook and all the doors and windows flew open. The fool was frightened half to death and ran to ask the cats what had happened. But – o wonder of wonders! – all the cats in the palace had turned into men and women, and the white cat was now a princess and so beautiful that her like could not be found anywhere, not even beyond the thrice-nine kingdom.

The beautiful princess rushed to the fool and she called him her own dear husband.

In the meantime the grooms had harnessed ten horses, the little old bay at the head, to a coach, and off the fool and the princess rode! So fast did they go that the trees on either side of the road bent to the ground, and when they were a mile away from the fool's house the gate posts flew up into the air.

At sight of the princess, whose beauty seemed to light up the house, the wives of the two clever brothers were all for running away then and there. And the father at once gave his house and land to the fool and wanted to drive his two clever sons out altogether. But the fool would take nothing for himself but the old bay horse and the plank cart and divided the rest equally between his brothers.

The fool and the princess went back to their palace and there they held their wedding. It was a rich wedding indeed and they had guests there from every corner of the earth!

I was invited, too, and, since this was no ordinary wedding but a royal one, I bought myself a coach of bread and horses of cake, shoes made of carrots and a hat made of butter, a glass dress and a paper umbrella. I got to the palace safely and in good time, and I saw all there was to see and heard all there was to hear. There was plenty of food and plenty of drink for all, and everyone feasted and made merry to his heart's content. The fool's father was at the wedding and so were his two clever brothers with their wives, and there were many maids of noble birth and many princesses, too, but none was as beautiful as the fool's bride.

Now, it was at the wedding that I heard that the princess's palace, where she and the fool lived, had once belonged to a king. One day it had been seized by devils who had turned all the people into cats, and the spell could only be broken if a man, any man, came to the palace three times and spent three days and three nights there every time. This was just what the fool had done and thus it was that he had set the beautiful princess and her servants free. Had he not come when he had, the devils would have eaten up all the cats.

And so that's the end of my tale.

THE BEAR WHO MARRIED A PEASANT'S DAUGHTER

Once upon a time there lived an old peasant whose wife had died leaving him alone save for their only child, a daughter.

Now, all of the peasant's kin lived far away from him, and one day, making up his mind to pay them a visit, he left his daughter at home by herself and drove away.

On and on he drove, and he strayed off the road many times, for it led through dense forests (the forests were larger in those days and there were no high roads), but he got there finally. His kinsfolk were all in good health and prosperous, and the peasant spent some time with them and then started off for home again.

Night caught him as he was passing through a large forest, and the peasant lost his way. Round and round he circled and at last found himself in so dense a thicket that he feared he would never get out of it. By and by he saw a light ahead. Thinking that there might be a house there, he drove toward it. But when he had driven up close he saw before him no ordinary house but a beautiful palace. He did not like to enter it at first, for he feared that he, a simple peasant, might not be welcome there, but remembering that there was nowhere else he could go, made for the door.

He came inside and looked in every nook and every corner, but there was not a soul to be seen anywhere.

All of a sudden, as if out of thin air, a large bear came lumbering toward him.

"What do you want here?" asked the bear.

The peasant was frightened, thinking that the bear would tear him to bits, but the bear never touched him.

"What do you want here?" he asked again. "I will help you if I can."

Said the peasant:

"I was coming back home from my kinsfolk's house and I lost my way in the forest. I'll never be able to find it again in the dark, so could you please tell me where I could spend the night?"

"You can stay in the palace," the bear replied. "There is no one here but me."

Seeing that he had nothing to fear from the bear, the peasant thanked him and said that he would.

The bear brought him some food and ate with him, and the peasant only marvelled to see him go about everything just as if he were not a bear at all but a man.

After supper they decided that it was time for a sleep, and the bear, like the peasant, slept in a bed. This was a strange bear, indeed – to be living in a huge palace all by himself and to be doing everything just like a man!

In the morning the bear gave the peasant some breakfast.

"What are you going to do now?" he asked.

"I'd like to go home," the peasant replied.

"Go, then."

Off the peasant set on his way. He drove through the forest for a long time, but no matter where he went he found himself back at the palace gate again.

It was there he was when evening set in, and he could do nothing about it.

So in he went to see the bear again and ask him to let him pass the night in the palace.

The bear let him in as he had the night before, gave him food and drink, put him to bed and looked after his horse, too.

Morning came, and the peasant said:

"Do show me the way home!"

"That I will," replied the bear, "but you must give me your daughter in marriage in return."

Now, this the peasant did not like to do. Not that his daughter would not be well off in the palace, only how could she marry a bear!

There was nothing for it but to find the way out of the forest without the bear's help.

All day the peasant circled the forest but when evening came he found himself at the palace gate again.

What was there to do but ask the bear to let him in for the night again! This he did, and the bear gave him food and drink, put him to bed and looked after his horse.

Morning came, and the peasant said to the bear:

"Do show me the way home!"

"That I will," the bear replied, "but you must give me your daughter in marriage in return."

The peasant was about to agree, but thinking that his daughter wouldn't like it, resolved to try just once more to find the way home by himself.

He circled the forest all day, round and round he drove, but when evening came found himself at the palace gate again. He now knew that, like it or not, there was no way out for him but to promise his daughter in marriage to the bear.

The bear received him with all the politeness due a future father-in-law and tried to please him in every way he could. He gave him food and drink, put him to bed and looked after his horse, too. There was nothing the peasant needed to do himself.

In the morning the bear went with the peasant and showed him the way home.

The peasant returned home with heavy heart, and his daughter at once saw that something was amiss.

"Is any of our kin dead or gravely ill?" she asked.

Loath as the peasant was to tell his daughter about the bear, he knew that he had to do it. So he told her all about everything, even of the promise he had made the bear to give her to him in marriage. Of course, the bear lived in a rich palace and behaved just like a man but that still did not make him one.

The daughter heard him out but was not in the least put out.

"The bear did you no harm, he even helped you to get back home. That means he'll do me no harm, either," she said.

So they set out from home together and drove to the bear's palace, and no welcome could have been better than the one the bear gave them.

The peasant stayed in the palace for a few days and then he went home, but his daughter remained with the bear. They were very happy together, and being there with him under one roof day in and day out, the maid noticed that the bear had a man's body under his skin. So she decided to watch him as he was making ready for bed.

One night she did not go to bed herself but crept up to

the bear's room and peeped in at the door. And what did she see but the bear take off his bearskin and turn into a man with only his head remaining a bear's head. The maid liked him that way more than ever and she said to herself that it would be a good thing if she could free him of the bearskin altogether.

Once, when the bear was fast asleep, she tiptoed in, took the skin that was lying at his feet and threw it in the stove.

The skin was burnt to a cinder, and the bear fell gravely ill. The maid knew why this was and she was very sorry for the bear, but there was nothing she could do to help him. The bear lay there for a day and he grew worse. He lay there for a second day, and he was worse still and looked as if he was close to death. The maid sat beside him on his bed and wept bitterly, but all her wails and sobs did not help. The third day came, and the maid told herself that he was going to die and she nearly died of grief herself.

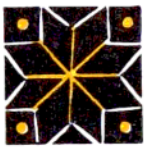
But the third day passed and the third night, too, and in the morning the bear turned into a prince so handsome that one could not take one's eyes off him. The maid was as happy as could be. She threw her arms round the prince's neck and begged him to forgive her for having made him suffer so. But the prince, far from being angry, did not know how to thank her enough. For, said he, the devil himself had turned him into a bear and his skin had to be burnt before he could become a man again. No one had known about it until she had come and done it and so broken the spell.

The prince and the peasant's daughter then held a wedding feast and invited all and sundry to it. There was enough food and drink for everyone, and the guests ate and drank to their hearts' content.

The peasant came to see his daughter and could hardly believe his eyes, for was it not something to be wondered at

that the bear could have changed into this tall and handsome prince!

The peasant's daughter and her husband begged him to live with them in the palace, and this he did and never left them again. And for all we can tell, the three of them must be living there still, and if only we knew where their palace was we could pay them a visit.



THE ROPE WITH THE THREE KNOTS

There were once a man and a woman who had one son. From his earliest years the boy was drawn to water. He had only to come out of the house, and there he was by the pond and in danger of falling in and drowning. His mother punished him and his father never spared the rod, but nothing helped – the pond drew him as before and whatever came to hand he would at once throw into it. The mother would miss now a wooden spoon, now a hat, now a pair of shoes, and every time there they were floating in the pond, the boy playing at sailing boats with them. And when he was a little older he would climb into a wooden tub or a feeding-trough and sail round

the pond. There was just no stopping him!

So the mother and father decided, since they could do nothing to cure him of these habits, to let him become a sailor. They took the boy to an old seaman and asked him to train him. The seaman agreed, and when the boy had been with him for some time, brought him back to the mother and father and said:

"I have taught your son everything I myself know. He will make a fine sailor."

And he gave his pupil a piece of rope with three knots in it.

"You now know what the sea and the wind are like," he said. "But knowing this is not enough. If there is no wind and the sea is calm a sailor must have patience and wait till it begins to blow and the sails fill out. If the wind is raging and there is a storm at sea he needs strength and courage and must not lose heart. You are a good lad and I've grown fond of you, so I'm giving you this piece of rope for a gift. So long as it is with you you can sail the seas in any kind of weather without fear. If there is a calm, undo the first knot and a fair wind will start to blow. If you are pursued by pirates, undo the second knot and a storm will begin such as will force them to give up the chase. If the storm keeps up too long and you want it to subside, undo the third knot and the sea will be calm again."

The youth began sailing the seas, and as fair winds followed him wherever he went he soon became known as the Lucky Skipper.

One day the Lucky Skipper cast anchor near the king's own city. Many ships were moored there at the time and they were making ready to put to sea when suddenly a dead calm fell. Not a ripple disturbed the water and, on land, not a leaf stirred on a tree, and willy-nilly all the ships had to remain in harbour.

A day passed, and a second day, and still there was no wind. The captains stood on their bridges and whistled,

trying to bring on the wind, and they fumed and raged and cursed the calm.

But more disheartened than any of the captains was the young prince of the realm, for he had to sail for the neighbouring kingdom soon or his bride-to-be, who awaited him there, would be given in marriage to another.

A day went by, and the prince promised a sack of gold to the captain who would take him to his bride. A second day went by, and he promised him his lifelong friendship. A third day went by, and he promised him his father's kingdom. Every captain there would have been glad enough to have it all, but what could they do when there was no wind!

On the fourth day the prince was on the verge of despair. He would not eat or drink, refused to wear any of his finery and threatened to do away with himself.

Hearing about it, the Lucky Skipper felt sorry for the prince and offered to take him where he wanted to go. He undid the first knot on his piece of rope and at once a fair wind began to blow. The ship was soon out of harbour and going so fast that she left huge breakers in her wake.

They arrived in the neighbouring kingdom just in time, for the bride's father had had it announced that if the bridegroom failed to arrive by morning he would give his daughter in marriage to another.

The prince and the princess were married, and theirs was the richest wedding ever seen!

The prince stayed with his wife in her realm and became king in her father's stead, and he said that the Lucky Skipper could have his father's kingdom in reward for his services.

The Lucky Skipper sailed back again. He put into port, anchored his ship and went to pay the old king a visit. It was in the palace that he first saw the king's youngest daughter and knew that he never wanted to part with her again. The princess, too, liked the Lucky Skipper at sight and told him that she preferred him to all her other suitors. She was very beautiful, and there had always been matchmakers milling

about in the king's anteroom, but she had refused to listen to any of them.

Now, however, she made her choice openly known, and there was nothing the matchmakers from all the many lands and realms could do but go away. Only one man, the ruler of an island kingdom, asked to be allowed to stay in the palace a while longer. He said that he hoped to meet a maid he might want to marry, and this so touched everyone that he was allowed to stay. None guessed that he had another and evil purpose in mind.

When night came this man and his servants seized the princess and put her on his ship, and they were soon under way and out in the open sea.

The grief of the princess's father and that of her husband-to-be knew no bounds. But whereas the old king sat and moped and shed tears the Lucky Skipper wasted no time and sailed in pursuit.

After some days he reached the island king's realm, but rocks and reefs surrounded the island, and there seemed to be no way of coming close to it.

The Lucky Skipper cast anchor some distance away, but the king sent out his ships, and they bore down upon him.

The ships bristled with guns and the men on board looked more savage than any he had ever seen, so the Lucky Skipper took out the piece of rope that the old seaman had given him and undid two of the knots. At once a lashing wind began to blow, and waves, each higher than the one that came before, swept in from all sides. Sails flapped madly, shrouds creaked, masts crashed down into the water, the sides of the enemy ships were cleft, rats scuttled about on the decks, and the men yelled and shrieked in terror. They would have been glad to get back to shore but could not! So fierce was the storm that the Lucky Skipper's ship, though held down by anchors, was flung about like a chip of wood.

The Lucky Skipper waited a little while and then undid the third knot. The storm subsided. The Lucky Skipper looked

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round him, but there was nothing on the now calm waters save some casks and boards. He docked, found his bride and sailed home with her.

Soon after that they were married, and theirs was the richest wedding ever seen! There was much dancing and singing and playing of games, and all who were not too lazy to do it joined in.

But it was all over at last, and the old king turned to the Lucky Skipper and said:

"And now, my son, my throne is yours, and you must rule the realm in my stead!"

The Lucky Skipper thought this over.

"What do I want to be king for!" said he at last. "I'm happy enough on my ship. Many are the kings and rulers I have seen, and it's not a life I covet. A king has got to fleece his subjects and war against his neighbours. No, I don't like it at all."

Off he made for his ship, taking his young wife with him, and they sailed the seas together.

Some time passed, and the Lucky Skipper's wife gave birth to a son, as fine a boy as his father had been, and they all lived very happily together till it was time for them to sail off on their last voyage.

But we must not forget about the piece of rope with the three knots, for you will be wondering where it is.

Well, like his father before him, the Lucky Skipper's son had taken to water like a duck and liked throwing all sorts of things in it—now it would be a pail, now a mop, now a life belt, now a cask. And one day he came upon the piece of rope with the three knots and threw it overboard, too. So that was that!

But, oh, wouldn't it be fun if one of us could find it!

HOW LAIMA MADE THREE WISHES COME TRUE

One winter night, Mother Laima, who was wandering over the earth, came into a peasant's hut to get warm.

Before leaving, she called the peasant's wife to her side.

"You let me warm myself in your hut," said she, "so I will make three of your wishes come true."

The peasant's wife was filled with excitement.

"Let there always be sausage frying in my pan!" she cried without thinking.

The same moment a sausage appeared in the pan and began to hiss and to sizzle!

The peasant came running up and began scolding his wife.

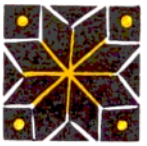
"You ninny you!" he cried. "Why couldn't you wish for some money? I hope the sausage sticks to your nose!"

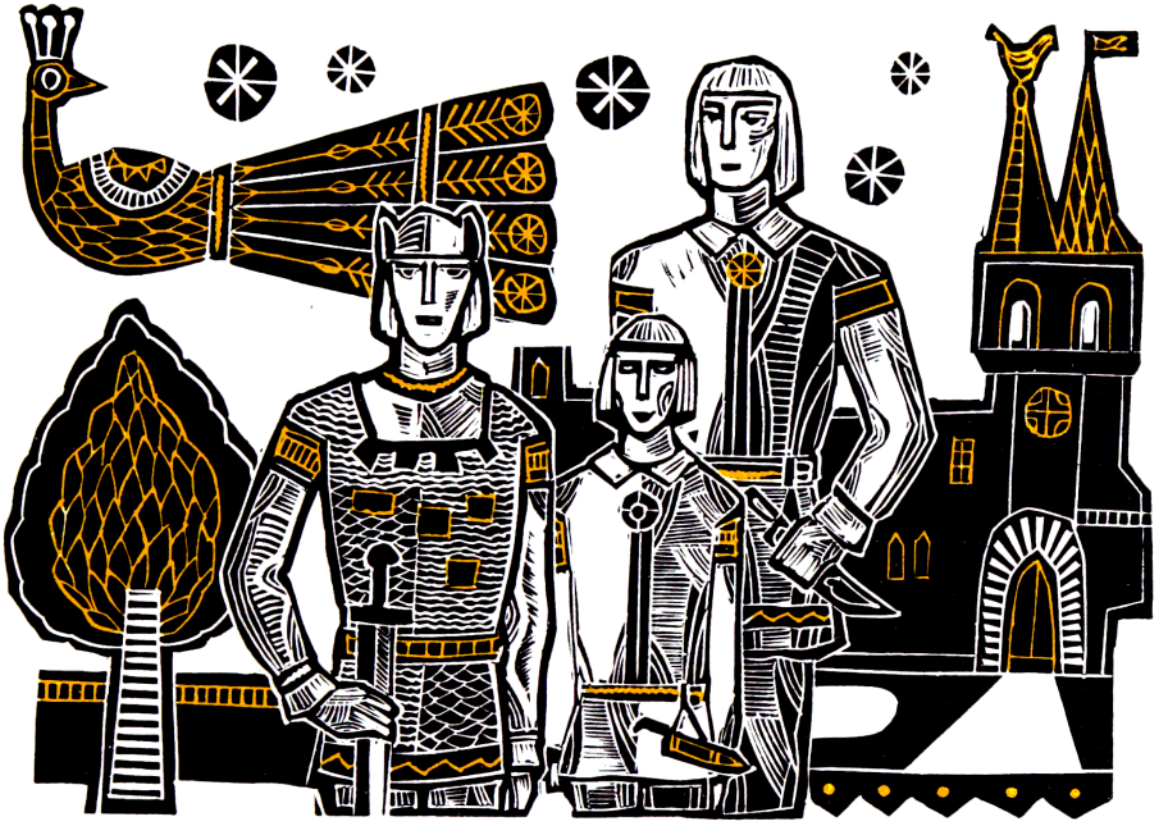
No sooner were the words out of his mouth than there was the sausage stuck to his wife's nose, and try as he would he could not tear it off!

The peasant was frightened and begged Laima to remove the sausage.

Laima did as he asked.

"You are not the first to have wasted my gifts so thoughtlessly," said she. "You told me your three wishes and I made them all come true. So goodbye for now and fare you well!"





BULBULIS THE BIRD

In a certain realm there once lived a king who had three sons. One day the sons heard that the king of the thrice-three realm had a bird that did whatever it was commanded to do. This bird was kept in a golden cage that hung on a three-crowned lime-tree in the king's garden. It was let out in the morning, but in the evening it would come flying back to its cage and spend the night in it. But, most important of all, the bird had a little ring on the claw of its left leg, and it was said that whoever took it off would have the bird in his power. Many had tried to get the ring but none had succeeded.

The three princes talked amongst themselves and decided to go and have a try, too.

The eldest of the three prepared to set out first. He saddled his horse and away he rode, and the two younger brothers rode with him as far as the bridge. There, the eldest brother sprang to the ground, made three notches on the rail with his sword and bade his two younger brothers come every day and look at them. As long as the notches were unstained it would mean that all was well with him, but if drops of blood appeared on them then the brothers were to make haste and come to his aid.

On the ninth day the eldest brother arrived in the thrice-three realm. He came to the king's palace and said that he wanted to get the bird for himself. But the king thought about it and shook his head.

"How ever do you mean to do it, my son?" he asked. "The bird is no ordinary bird but a magic one known as Bulbulis the Bird. Many were the men who tried to capture it, but none succeeded, and no matter how many more try to do it they will not succeed, either."

But the eldest brother would not be talked out of it.

"That may well be, but try I will just the same!" he said.

Well and good. The sun was just beginning to set when he came into the garden and began looking round for the three-crowned lime-tree. He looked to one side, and it wasn't there; he looked to another, and it wasn't there, either. Then he pushed through some thick birches, and there it was! Overjoyed, he walked on and found himself in a small glade with the three-crowned lime-tree just before him and the golden cage hanging from its branch. The glade was thickly grown with grass, and Bulbulis the Bird not yet having returned, a deep silence reigned there.

The prince hid himself in the grass and waited.

By and by the whole garden seemed to come alive and swell with sound just as if thousands upon thousands of birds had

suddenly burst into song there. Bulbulis the Bird now came flying up. It lighted on the cage, and looking to all sides of it, said in the most piteous of tones:

"Everyone is asleep. Is there not a soul anywhere here who will say: 'Why don't you go to sleep, too, Bulbulis the Bird!'"

"Well, if that is all it wants I can do it, it's easy enough," thought the eldest brother, and he said aloud:

"Go to sleep, Bulbulis the Bird!"

The same moment Bulbulis the Bird struck him with its wing, and – lo and behold! – the eldest brother turned into a birch.

On the following morning the two younger brothers came out on to the bridge and they saw that there were drops of blood on the notches.

The middle brother at once prepared to set out and seek his elder brother, and away he rode at a gallop for the thrice-three realm. There, he was met by the king who told him that his elder brother had gone to the garden to catch Bulbulis the Bird but had not returned.

The middle brother came into the garden, he looked here and he looked there, but he saw neither his brother nor the three-crowned lime-tree. Then he pushed through some thick birches, and there before him was the lime-tree!

The middle brother hid himself in the grass and waited. A deep silence reigned all around, but the sun sank, it grew darker, and the whole garden came alive and swelled with sound just as if thousands upon thousands of birds had suddenly burst into song there. Bulbulis the Bird came flying up. It lighted on the golden cage, looked to all sides and said in the most piteous of tones:

"Everyone is asleep. Is there not a soul anywhere here who will say, 'Why don't you go to sleep, too, Bulbulis the Bird!'"

The middle brother said nothing, so after a while Bulbulis the Bird brought out again in the most piteous of tones:

"Everyone sleeps, I alone must stay awake. Is there not a

soul anywhere here who will say, 'Go to sleep, Bulbulis the Bird!'"

The middle brother was touched by these words and felt sorry for the bird.

"Go to sleep, Bulbulis the Bird!" said he.

The same moment Bulbulis the Bird struck him with its wing, and – lo and behold! – the middle brother turned into a birch.

On the following morning the youngest brother came to the bridge and he saw drops of blood on the notches. He prepared to set off at once to seek his brothers and rode off at a gallop for the thrice-three realm.

There he was met by the king who told him that his brothers had gone to the garden to catch Bulbulis the Bird but had not returned.

The youngest brother came into the garden, he looked here and he looked there, but he saw neither his brothers nor the three-crowned lime-tree. Then he pushed through some thick birches, and there before him was the lime-tree! The grass around it was trampled but there was not a sign of his brothers.

The youngest brother hid himself in the grass within easy reach of the golden cage and waited. A deep silence reigned, but the sun sank, and the garden came alive and swelled with sound just as if thousands upon thousands of birds had suddenly burst into song there. Bulbulis the Bird came flying up. It lighted on the golden cage, looked to all sides and brought out in the most piteous of tones:

"Everyone is asleep. Is there not a soul anywhere here who will say, 'Go to sleep, Bulbulis the Bird!'"

The youngest brother made no reply.

By and by Bulbulis the Bird brought out again in the most piteous of tones:

"Everyone sleeps, I alone must stay awake. Is there not a soul anywhere here who will say, 'Go to sleep, Bulbulis the Bird!'"

 The youngest brother said nothing again.

In a little while Bulbulis the Bird began wailing and weeping and it muttered between sobs:

"Everyone is asleep, I alone dare not close my eyes. Is there not a soul here who will say, 'Go to sleep, Bulbulis the Bird!'"

At this the youngest brother felt that he could not keep silent any longer and was about to speak when Bulbulis the Bird, tiring of saying the same thing over and over again, hopped into its golden cage. Once there, it looked to all sides, and not hearing or seeing anyone, buried its beak in its feathers and went to sleep. The youngest brother now knew that he had done well by keeping mum. He crept out of the grass very quietly and reached through the cage door for the ring on the bird's claw. He drew it off with his right hand and – bang! – shut the door of the cage with his left one.

Bulbulis the Bird started awake, it flung and tore about in the cage, flapped its wings and wept and sobbed. Only toward dawn did it quieten down, and hanging its head, said:

"You have my ring, so now I am in your power."

"Tell me, Bulbulis the Bird, where are my brothers?" asked the youngest brother.

"There! Those two birches are your brothers."

"Tell me, Bulbulis the Bird, are the other birches I see here men, too?"

"Yes, they are."

"Tell me, Bulbulis the Bird, how am I to bring them back to life?"

"Go deeper into the birch grove, and if you look round you carefully you will see a heap of sand. Throw three handfuls of the sand at each of the birches, and they will get back their proper shape."

The youngest brother did as Bulbulis the Bird said. He broke the spell cast over his two brothers first, and when they got back their proper shape, the three of them began trying to break the spell cast over the other men. But they could not do it fast enough, and it was only when those they had

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brought back to life began helping them that all the birches vanished, and the whole grove, indeed, the whole garden filled with men. They stood round the youngest brother and could not speak for joy.

The youngest brother then thought of a way of pleasing them even more, and he asked Bulbulis the Bird to sing for them the way it had the night before.

Bulbulis the Bird did as he asked, and its voice enchanted them all.

Three days passed, and it was decided to part company, the three brothers going off in one direction, and the rest, in another.

It was noon when the three brothers reached the seashore.

The two elder brothers wanted to walk on, but the youngest was so tired that he lay down on the ground and fell asleep.

Seeing him lying there, the two elder brothers, wretches that they were, decided to do away with him and get Bulbulis the Bird for themselves.

And that was just what they did. They took Bulbulis the Bird and then threw their brother into the sea, but they left the ring on his finger.

They came home and boasted to their father that they had caught Bulbulis the Bird and that it had not been at all easy, and they said that they did not know where their younger brother was.

They had thought that Bulbulis the Bird would obey their commands and shower them with riches, but with the ring gone, it did nothing of the sort and only sat there with hanging head.

Much time passed, and the two elder brothers lived in the palace unbothered by what they had done. Not so the king their father, who missed his youngest son sorely and wept when he thought of him.

 But though he did not know it, his son was alive and well.

He had not drowned when his brothers threw him into the sea but had been carried by the waves to the sea queen's castle, and the queen had fallen in love with the tall and handsome prince and married him.

One day the water nymphs came to see the happy couple and told them that they had heard the old king weeping and saying over and over again how sorely he missed his son. Taking pity on his father, the prince decided to pay him a visit. He rubbed the ring he had got from Bulbulis the Bird, and it at once turned into a golden bridge that stretched from his wife's castle to his father's palace.

Seeing his son alive and well, the king could hardly speak for joy. Then Bulbulis the Bird began to sing and it told the king how the prince had fared at his elder brothers' hands. The two brothers fell on their knees before the prince and begged his forgiveness, and so kind of heart was he that he forgave them and persuaded his father to do the same.

The prince spent three days with his father and at dawn of the fourth day he took Bulbulis the Bird and went home to his wife. And no sooner had the gate of her castle opened to admit him than the bridge vanished and turned back into a ring again.

STRONGFIST

There were once a man and a wife who had one son, a big, strong, healthy lad whom everyone called Strongfist. When Strongfist reached the age of eighteen he decided to go and see what the world was like. He forged himself a stick of iron weighing all of twenty poods, and not a day passed but he would beg his parents to let him go. The father agreed at once, but the mother said:

"I won't let you go until you root out that old oak-tree there and plant it under my window for me to remember you by."

 That was a simple thing for Strongfist to do, and he

uprooted the oak-tree and planted it under his mother's window before breakfast had been served. Seeing it there, the mother got together a whole sackful of food for Strongfist to take with him and saw him off on his way.

Strongfist walked along the road at first, but when he saw that the people he met, alarmed by the size of him, ran from him in fright he turned into the forest and followed a forest path. He crossed the forest, came out of it and saw a man before him ploughing a field. The man made no attempt to run away, and this pleased Strongfist who came up to him and asked him if he found it hard to plough.

"What do you think!" the man said. "Can't you see that my face is streaming with sweat and my horse is all covered with lather?"

"Look, friend," Strongfist said, "it seems to me that your horse needs to be fed. Unharness it and let it graze, and I'll pull the plough in its stead."

The man let loose his horse and harnessed Strongfist to the plough, but try as he would, he could not keep pace with him, and forced to run after the plough, was soon quite worn out.

"This won't do!" Strongfist said. "You'd better go and fetch us some food. I'll plough the field by myself."

By the time the man brought the food Strongfist had ploughed the whole field, and the two of them sat down and began to eat. When they had had their fill, the man thanked Strongfist for his help and prepared to take his plough home, but Strongfist stopped him, saying:

"This field is too small for you. The yield won't be big enough for yourself alone, to say nothing of your wife and children. Let me have the plough and I'll plough up a piece of land stretching from here to the king's palace."

"You must be off your head! Why, it will only make the king angry."

"If he's so foolish as to be angry because of such a trifle, then let him be."

Strongfist began ploughing, and when he had ploughed for a day there was the king glancing out of one of the palace windows. Strongfist ploughed for a second day, and the king began to chafe and to fume. Strongfist ploughed for a third day, and the king appeared before him.

"Who gave you permission to plough here?" asked he.

"No one. I did it because I felt I had to. This plot of land is so small that the man who owns it will never be able to feed himself and his family, they'll all die of hunger, while your field lies idle."

"What's that to you!" the king said. "If you don't put aside your plough, my soldiers will drive you away from here."

"Do you think you can frighten me?" Strongfist said, and turning away, he went back to his ploughing.

At this the king flew into a rage. He summoned three hundred soldiers and bade them drive out Strongfist, but Strongfist took up his iron stick and struck them all down with it. The king then summoned six hundred soldiers, but Strongfist did away with them, too. At last the king summoned nine hundred soldiers, but Strongfist took up his iron stick again and slew the lot. He was about to slay the king too, but the king began begging him for mercy and even promised to give him his own daughter in marriage if only he spared his life.

"Very well!" Strongfist cried, well pleased. "I'll finish my ploughing by evening and then you can send your coach for me."

Evening came, and the king ordered his strongest horses to be harnessed to his coach and himself went to fetch Strongfist. But no sooner had Strongfist got into the coach with his heavy stick of iron and seated himself than – crash! – the axles broke down. Another coach was sent for, but the same thing happened. So then the best coach the king had was brought, and they just managed to drag to the palace in it.

The princess met them at the gate, and Strongfist got out of the coach and came up to her.

"Will you have me for your husband, fairest of maids?" he asked.

"How can I refuse a man so strong and brave!" the princess said. "But there is something I want you to do, and you must promise to do it before we are wed."

"Gladly! Anything you wish."

"Then listen to me. Beyond the thrice-three realm there stands a castle surrounded by high, thick walls. In that castle live my elder sister and the king her husband. They were very happy together for a long time, but one day something terrible happened. A devil and his two brothers seized the castle and plunged it in such darkness that those living there are deprived of the light of day. Deliver them from the devils, and you and I will be wed."

"All right, I'll do it!" Strongfist said. "But since I have to go a long way, the king your father must give me a horse to ride on."

The king gave Strongfist the best horse in the realm, and away rode Strongfist at a gallop! But halfway to the castle the horse was so worn out that it could take him no farther. There was nothing to be done, so Strongfist stripped a lime-tree of bark, plaited a rope out of it, and finding a glade, tethered the horse there that it might feed on the grass. Then, taking his stick, he went on on foot. He had not gone far, however, when he heard a strange noise. He stopped and listened but could not make out what it was. He came up closer and saw a tiny little man in a glade fighting a huge snake.

No sooner did the little man catch sight of Strongfist than he asked him to help him kill the snake.

"Gladly!" said Strongfist, and he brandished the stick and killed the snake with one blow.

"Thank you for helping me!" said the tiny little man. "I have nothing with me I can give you to show how grateful I am, but if ever you need me, I'll come and help you."

Off Strongfist went and on he walked till he came to the

castle that the devils had seized and where the king and his wife languished in darkness.

Feeling tired, he decided to rest and pick up some strength before facing the devils. He was about to sit down when a fearful-looking giant came out of the forest and attacked him. But Strongfist was too quick for him. He snatched up his iron stick and drove the giant to his chest into the ground. The giant cried out at this and begged Strongfist to spare his life, promising to be a friend to him always if he did.

"Since you speak to me of friendship, tell me why you attacked me," Strongfist said.

The giant heaved a sigh.

"The three devils who dwell in these parts have me in their power, and it is they who force me to kill everyone who comes here," he said. "There is nothing I want so much as to be rid of them, but I can't do it without help."

"Don't you worry, I'll help you," said Strongfist. "Only tell me where I am to find the devils, for I came here in order to get them out of the king's castle."

"That will not be as simple as you think," said the giant. "You may be able to get the better of the devils, but the witch can well prove a match for you. So here's a piece of advice. Don't fight the devils anywhere near the castle, for the witch might hear you and come running to help them. Hide in this cave, and in the evening, when the first devil is on his way to the castle, I'll call him here and you'll do away with him and take away the apple he carries about with him. The apple is a magic apple. Take a bite of it, and you turn into whoever you wish; take another bite, and you get back your proper shape again. Now, you had better turn into a mosquito, for then you'll be able to get close to the witch and hear what she says."

Evening came, and there was the first of the devils making for the castle. Seeing him, the giant beckoned him near.

"What do you want?" the devil asked, running up to him.

"Someone has got into the cave, and I can do nothing with him. You'd better deal with him yourself," said the giant.

"Let him come out, then!" the devil roared.

Out came Strongfist, and he and the devil grappled together and fought for a long time. Then Strongfist struck the devil with his iron stick, and the devil gave a jerk and another and breathed his last. Strongfist took a bite of the apple, turned into a mosquito, and making straight for the castle, flew into the witch's chamber through the keyhole. The witch never saw him nor felt his presence, but she sat there troubled, mumbling to herself:

"Someone must have done my husband to death or he would have been home long before now!"

The little devils, her children, tried to comfort her.

"Do not be grieved, father must just have been held up on the way," they said.

"No, I feel sure he's dead. If only I knew who killed him I'd have gobbled them up alive!" she said.

Strongfist flew back to the giant, took a bite of the apple, and getting back his proper shape again, told him what he had heard the witch say.

"Good!" said the giant. "What we must do now is get the better of those two other devils. After that we'll deal with the witch."

On the following evening there was the second devil making his way to the castle, and seeing him, the giant beckoned him near.

"What do you want?" the devil asked, running up to him.

"Someone has got into the cave, and I can do nothing with him. You'd better deal with him yourself," the giant said.

"Where is he? Let him come out, then!" the devil roared.

Out came Strongfist, and the two of them grappled together and fought for a long time. Then Strongfist got the better of the devil and struck him with his iron stick, and the devil gave a jerk and another and breathed his last.

On the third evening there was the third devil making

his way to the castle, and seeing him, the giant beckoned him near.

"What do you want?" the devil asked.

"Someone has got into the cave, and I can do nothing with him. You'd better deal with him yourself!" the giant said.

"Where is he? Let him come out, then!" the devil roared.

Out came Strongfist, and they grappled together and fought for a long time. Then Strongfist struck the devil with his iron stick, and the devil gave a jerk and another and breathed his last.

"Well, that's that!" said the giant. "Now it's time for me to do my bit. I must get us a good pair of pincers and some nails first. Then, while you hide in the cave, I'll go to the witch and tell her that all the three devils are dead, killed by a giant so strong that neither she nor anyone else can get the better of him. She'll ask me what I think she should do, and I will tell her to creep up to the cave and make a hole in the wall big enough for her to thrust her tongue through it. I will also tell her that the giant will want to see what it is and that as soon as he grasps her tongue she will be able to swallow him. The witch will believe me, I'm sure. But mind that you don't touch her tongue with your bare hands. Seize it with the pincers and hold it fast, and I'll come running up and nail it to the rock. The witch will then be forced to stay in the cave always, and the little devils with her, for we'll get them into it, too. And then the darkness hemming in the castle will vanish and descend on the cave instead."

And as the giant said so it was. No sooner had the witch thrust her tongue in through the hole than Strongfist seized it with the pincers and the giant nailed it to the rock. After that they drove the little devils into the cave, and the castle was flooded with light again and sparkled and shone like a great nugget of gold.

 The king was overjoyed and did not know how to repay

Strongfist for what he had done, but Strongfist would take nothing from him.

"I will not take anything from a kinsman of mine, and that is who you are," he said. "For I only delivered you from the devils because I want to marry your wife's sister."

Now, this made the king and queen very happy, for they could wish for nothing better than to have someone so brave and strong in the family.

Two days passed, and on the third day Strongfist prepared to leave for home where his bride awaited him.

Off he went, and the selfsame giant met him on the way.

"I want to thank you for helping me to rid myself of the witch and the devils," he said. "Now I am free. But I helped you, too, so you must give me the witch's apple in reward."

"Why not!" said Strongfist. "I'll give you the apple if you fetch me a cart that will carry me through the air, I don't feel like walking."

"Wait here, and I'll bring it!" the giant said.

He brought the cart and gave it to Strongfist, and Strongfist let him have the apple in return.

Off went Strongfist in the cart, sailing through the air, and before he could count to two there he was in the forest glade where he had tethered his horse. The horse had eaten its fill of the grass and was waiting for him, but Strongfist decided to have a rest before he went any farther.

"I'm very tired," he said to himself. "I think I'll lie down here and have a sleep. I'm sure I can get home in time just the same."

Down he lay and fell asleep, and while he slept the giant told himself that he needed the cart no less than Strongfist did and rushed after him. Seeing him lying there asleep, he fell on him and killed him and took away the cart.

Strongfist lay there for a day and he lay there for a night, and in the morning the tiny little man whom Strongfist had saved from the snake appeared. He put a magic salve on

Strongfist's wounds, brought him back to life and told him of all that had happened to him while he slept. Strongfist thanked him not once but a hundred times, and jumping on his horse's back, rode off in all haste for the king's palace.

Soon after that Strongfist and the princess were married and held a wedding feast, and all the people who had been kept in the castle by the devils and freed by Strongfist attended it. Strongfist's mother and father came, too, and they all feasted and made merry for nine days and nine nights on end.

And when the old king died Strongfist became king in his stead.

THE THREE MAGIC THINGS

There was once a man who had three sons, two of them clever young men and the third, the youngest, a fool. A wide river ran near the man's farm, and the sons had to ferry people across it.

One day a stranger came up to the eldest son.

"Take me across the river!" he said.

Well and good, and the eldest son ferried him across.

"What would you like to have in reward," asked the man when they reached the opposite shore, "a bag of gold or three magic things?"

"A bag of gold," said the eldest son.

"Very well!" said the man, and giving him a bag of gold, vanished.

On the second night the same thing happened to the middle son and he, too, chose the bag of gold.

On the third night it was the fool's turn to be the ferryman, and the same man came up to him and asked to be taken across the river.

Well and good, and the fool ferried him across.

"What would you like to have in reward, fool," asked the man when they reached the opposite shore, "a bag of gold or three magic things?"

"What's a bag of gold! I think I'll have the three magic things."

"Will you now? It looks like you're cleverer than the other two. Here is the first magic thing—a horse hair. Put it between your lips and say, 'I want to be a horse and nothing but a horse!' and you'll turn into a horse. Here is the second magic thing—a pigeon feather. Put it between your lips and say, 'I want to be a pigeon and nothing but a pigeon!' and you'll turn into a pigeon. And here is the third magic thing—a fish scale. Put it between your lips and say, 'I want to be a fish and nothing but a fish!' and you'll turn into a fish. And if you want to become a man again, put the hair or the feather or the scale, as the case may be, between your lips and say, 'I want to be a man and nothing but a man!' and you'll get back your proper shape."

And having said this, the stranger vanished.

As for the fool, he at once turned himself into a fish, swam across the river, and getting back his proper shape again, went off to roam the wide world.

He walked and he walked, and he reached a forest so dense and thick that he could not make his way through it. But this did not daunt him. He turned into a pigeon and flew over the forest. On and on he flew till he saw a field, and so large was it that you could not see from one end of it to another. But he at once changed himself

into a horse and before one could count to two had galloped across the field and reached a palace that stood just beyond it.

What was he to do next? He thought about it and decided to take up service with the king. This he did, and when the king set out to pay another king a visit, he took him with him. Now, this other king had a daughter who was a joy to behold so lovely was she, and the fool fell in love with her at sight and did not know what to do about it, for who would give a princess in marriage to a poor man!

One day a messenger arrived at court, bringing evil tidings to the king in whose service the fool was. The king's lands had been overrun by enemies who could not be driven out, and his councillors wanted him to return at once.

The king, who had turned as white as a sheet, prepared to set out for home.

"You must not go alone, for you can never tell what you may be up against," his host said. "I will go with you."

They came to the first king's realm and when they saw the size of the enemy host they knew that they could not hope to rout it.

"A pity I haven't my largest sword with me," said the second king, "for I could have made short work of the enemy with it. The point is how to get the sword here in time – the way is far too long. If only someone fetched it before morning I'd give him my own daughter in marriage."

The fool heard him and at once rushed off to get the sword. He never spared himself but went as fast as he could – in the guise of a horse wherever there were roads, in the guise of a pigeon when there were none, and in the guise of a fish when there were rivers to swim. Not once did he stop for a rest, and he was quite out of breath when he reached the palace and ran into the princess's chamber.

"Give me your father's largest sword!" he cried. "He must have it by morning."

"By morning?" asked the princess, surprised. "You'll never get there in time, the way is far too long."

"Nonsense! I'll gallop in the guise of a horse, I'll fly in the guise of a pigeon, I'll swim in the guise of a fish, and I swear I'll get there before night."

But the princess would not believe him, for how could a man gallop like a horse, fly like a pigeon and swim like a fish!

"Well, then, watch! I haven't much time, but what can I do with a stubborn lass like you!" the fool cried, and he turned into a horse who said to the princess:

"Please, lass, pluck three hairs out of my mane and hide them in a safe place."

This the princess did, and lo!—the horse turned back into the fool again and the fool turned into a pigeon who said in pleading tones:

"Please, lass, pluck three feathers from one of my wings and hide them in a safe place."

This the princess did, and lo!—the pigeon turned back into the fool again and the fool turned into a fish who said in pleading tones:

"Please, lass, scrape three scales from off my tail and hide them in a safe place."

This the princess did, and the fool got back his proper shape again. He took the sword and was about to set out on his way when the princess stopped him.

"Whoever can work such miracles is no ordinary man," she said. "I have always longed to marry someone like that!"

"Good!" the fool returned. "I have been trying to win a maid as lovely as you are for a long time, too."

And having hastily made plans about their wedding, they parted.

One-two!—and the fool galloped across fields in the guise of a horse, flew over forests in the guise of a pigeon and swam rivers in the guise of a fish, and the second king's largest sword was in the first king's palace before dark. Now,

there was no one there at the time but the cook who was an evil man and a crafty one.

"How you could have carried the sword I don't know," he said, "it's far too heavy. I'm sure I couldn't even lift the scabbard."

"How can you tell before you've tried!" said the fool, and he gave him the sword.

The cook cut off the fool's head with it, dragged his body behind some bushes, and running to the second king, told him that he had brought him his sword. The king was very pleased. He told the cook that he would be happy to have him for a son-in-law, and waving the sword right and left, wiped out the enemy host to a man before one could count to two.

Both kings were overjoyed and said so, and on the very next day the second king set off for home, taking the cook whom he called his own dear son-in-law with him.

As for the fool, he lay dead where he had been left by the cook when the man he had ferried across the river happened to be passing by there and saw him. He at once sent a raven to fetch some living water, sprinkled the fool with it and brought him back to life.

"What a fool you are!" he said. "Why did you give up your sword to the cook? Make haste and be off now, gallop in the guise of a horse, fly in the guise of a pigeon, swim in the guise of a fish, and get to your promised bride before evening, for if you don't they will marry her to the cook instead of to you."

It was only then that the fool realised what a fool he had been.

One-two!—and there he was by the second king's palace. He came inside, and everyone there was making merry, and only the princess looked sad. She did not see the fool at first, but he waved to her and she saw him and hastened to his side.

The fool poured out his story, but the second king would

not believe him. So then the princess spoke up, saying to the cook:

"If you are my promised husband, as you say, then turn into a horse, a pigeon and a fish!"

It was a strange request, and the guests waited round-eyed to see what would happen next.

The cook looked frightened.

"Why do you laugh at me!" said he to the princess. "No one can do it."

"Yes, they can!" said the princess. "And unlike you, he who can do it is an honest man."

The fool waited no more. He turned into a horse, and the princess put the three hairs she had plucked out of it to his mane and they grew fast to it. He turned into a pigeon, and the princess put the three feathers she had plucked out of it to its wing and they grew fast to it. He turned into a fish, and the princess put the three scales she had scraped off it to its tail and they grew fast to it, too.

Everyone now knew the cook for the evil man that he was and they put him to death then and there. And as for the fool, he married the princess and lived happily ever after.

THE LORD WHO BECAME A BLACKSMITH

There was once a lord who was on his way to a certain place on business when his coach broke down. Luckily, there happened to be a smithy nearby, so the lord ordered the coach to be repaired without delay. That was all right with the blacksmith who went to work at once and was done before you could count to two. He asked a ruble in payment, and the lord gave it him, for he could not very well do anything else, but the sum seeming much too high to him, he became very angry. He rode home and he muttered half under his breath:

"To take a whole ruble for such a trifle! All he did was

take off the thing, heat it, give a knock on it here and another there, cool it and put it back again. Work? Bah! A mere nothing, and he gets a ruble for it! Why, that blacksmith must take in more money than I, a lord, do! Come to think of it, I could be doing what he does just as well and lining my pockets. Now, wait a minute, why don't I watch him for a spell and then take over his job and drive him out of his shop altogether!"

So the lord began visiting the smithy and watching the blacksmith at work. It all seemed simple as pie to him; in fact, he soon felt that he had mastered the trade and knew all there was to know about it. He drove out the blacksmith, set his coachman to fanning the flame with a bellows, and himself took up a hammer—come up, good folk, and the lord will forge whatever it is you want him to forge!

Soon a farmer from a neighbouring village came to the smithy. He brought with him a piece of iron and he asked for a ploughshare to be forged out of it.

The lord glanced at him with an air of importance, took the piece of iron, thrust it into the forge, and putting some coals on top, called to the coachman:

"Hey, there, look sharp and blow the fire!"

The coachman did as he was told and set to with all his strength. When the piece of iron had been heated to white heat, the lord flung it on the anvil and turned to the farmer.

"You, there, hammer away at it and be quick about it!" he cried.

The farmer picked up the blacksmith's big, heavy hammer and began hammering at the iron so hard that the sparks flew. And the lord took a small hammer and joined him. The big hammer went "Wham!" and the small one "Clank-clank!", the big hammer went "Wham!" and the small one "Clank-clank!" again, and the sound of it carried all over the neighbourhood, just the way it used to when the blacksmith had been in the shop.

The farmer looked and he saw that the iron had cooled and turned dark but there was no ploughshare to show for it. As for the lord, he never turned a hair. He thrust the iron back into the forge and ordered the coachman to blow the fire, and as soon as the iron was hot again flung it on the anvil. They hammered away again, the two of them, and the iron began to wear thin.

"We'll spoil the piece at this rate and all for nothing!" said the farmer.

"What do you know about it, you fool!" the lord said. "Come, coachman, take the hammer from him and beat away with it!"

The coachman set to work, he and the lord went at the piece of iron with their hammers, but though they made a great din and racket, there was no ploughshare to show for it. They went on with it for a while and then the lord said to the farmer:

"I've never seen such poor iron as yours! A ploughshare can never be made out of it, but I'll forge you an axe instead."

This did not make the farmer any too happy, but what could he do!

"Oh, all right, let it be so," said he. "I can always use an extra axe."

They began heating the iron and forging it again, and there was less and less of it every moment. The lord saw that though they were making a great din and racket, there would be no axe to show for it.

"This is very poor iron indeed!" said he. "An axe can never be made out of it, but I'll forge you a knife instead."

"Oh, all right," the farmer agreed. "A knife will come in handy, too."

They began heating and forging the iron again, and hammered away at it, but though they made a great din and racket, there was no knife to show for it.

Said the lord to the farmer:

"I've never seen such poor iron as this! A knife can never be made out of it, but I'll forge you a sizz instead."

"Oh, all right, then!" said the farmer and he glanced at the lord, but what he was thinking the lord never knew.

They began forging the iron again, but there was only a little bit of it left now and even less by the time they were through with it. The lord took it out of the forge and threw it in a tub of water. There was a–s-s-s-siz!– and the tiny bit of iron darkened.

Said the lord to the farmer:

"A fine sizz, and at least we haven't worked in vain. That'll be a ruble, my good fellow!"

"I haven't one," said the farmer. "But I do have some fine wheat at home. Come to see me, Your Honour, and I'll pay you as you deserve!"

Off rode the farmer, and the lord, impatient to get what he thought he had earned, at once ordered his coach to be brought round and drove after him.

"I'll take the sack and go into the storeroom myself," he said to his coachman, "for I know how much is owing me. The farmer will start filling the sack, and you lend an ear and listen. When you hear him say 'That's enough', shout as loud as you can, 'No, it's not! Let him have my share, too!'"

And so that was the way they settled it.

They came to the farmer's house, and the farmer led the lord to the storeroom where he had two strong, brawny youths lying in wait for him. The moment the lord came in the youths seized him, laid him down on a bench and went at him with birch rods.

Not wanting his coachman to know how he was being treated, the lord bore the pain in silence. They gave him a sound flogging and then the farmer said:

"Well, that's enough, I suppose!"

But the coachman heard him and shouted at the top of his voice:

"No, it's not! Let him have my share, too!"

So then they set to again and let the lord have the coachman's share as well.

And from that time on, so they say, the lord did not try to forge anything any more, not even a sizz!

THE BARON AND THE SHEPHERD

A young shepherd lad was once out with his herd while his father was ploughing the field nearby, for what else is a peasant to do in spring, when all of a sudden who should come riding up to them but the baron himself! With his pot belly and spindly legs and his stuck-up airs, he was a baron like any other, and he opened his eyes wide and gaped at the peasant.

"Hey, there, shepherd!" he called. "What is that peasant doing?"

"That's my father, my lord, and he's turning the earth's overcoat inside out, for it is badly worn on top," the shepherd replied.

"What does that mean?" asked the baron, surprised.

"Just this, my lord! My father is ploughing the field, for if he leaves it unploughed the foolish baron will never get a penny."

The baron was ill pleased with the shepherd's words and could hardly contain his anger.

"What is your mother doing, my lad?" he asked.

"Baking bread that's already been eaten."

"What does that mean?" And the baron stared at the shepherd, goggle-eyed.

"Just this, my lord! She borrowed some bread from the neighbours last week, and now she is baking some in order to give back what she owes. But no sooner has she done so than she'll borrow some again so that my father can plough your land."

"And what is your sister doing, my lad?"

"Weeping over lost hopes."

"What does that mean?"

"Just this, my lord! She was married last year and as happy as can be. But this year she weeps, for you've sent her husband off to the army and she hasn't food enough in the house and doesn't know how she will feed her child."

The baron was ill pleased with the shepherd's words. He glanced at his riding crop and then at the lad's stick, and thinking, "You wait, I'll teach you how to speak like that to me!" said in kindly tones:

"Come to my house tomorrow, my lad, and I'll give you a rare treat to reward you for the way you answered my questions."

"Thank you, my lord, I'll be glad to come," the lad replied.

On the next morning the baron had no sooner opened his eyes than there was the shepherd before him.

"Go to my cellar!" said the baron. "You will get what is owing you there."

And he ordered his servant to lead the way and to take a whip with him.

The shepherd followed the servant into the cellar, and seeing the whip sticking out from under his livery coat, knew at once what he was to expect.

"See that wine cask, my lad?" said the servant. "Well, just you go up to it, take out the plug and drink your fill!"

"I don't know how to take out the plug," the shepherd said. "Show me how it's done."

The servant bent over the cask, took out the plug and stopped up the hole with his finger.

"That is how!" he said.

At this the shepherd snatched the whip from under the servant's coat and went at him with it, and the servant only stood there and did nothing, for he was afraid to take his finger out of the cask lest all his master's wine run out of it.

So soundly did the shepherd lay to that he soon had the servant stretched out by the cask more dead than alive. After that he picked a good ham for himself, slipped it under his shirt and left the cellar.

The baron stood gazing out of the window and he saw the shepherd walking away, holding on to what looked like a hump on his back. The baron was very pleased.

"Well, how did you like your treat?" he called.

"Very much, my lord, thank you. I'll never forget your kindness."

The shepherd left the yard, and the servant crawled out of the cellar barely alive. Oh, how angry the baron was! To be made a fool of by a mere lad – why, it was more than anyone could stand.

On the next day the baron set out to find the shepherd and teach him a lesson. Now, the shepherd had been making gruel – he had put some fine-ground barley in a pot, cooked it till it was soft and then added milk to it – and was now carrying it in a wooden jug to the field for his father to have at dinner-time. He looked and he saw the baron, wind-

bag that he was, come riding toward him on horseback with his long hunting crop in his hand. The shepherd knew very well what this could mean. He put the jug of gruel down on a tree stump, ran to the blacksmith's, snatched a piece of red-hot iron out of the forge, and running back again, threw it in the gruel. The gruel boiled up, it flowed over the edge of the jug, and the shepherd began running round the tree stump.

The baron came riding up, and his eyes widened at the sight of the shepherd running round a tree stump on which stood a boiling, steaming jug of gruel. This was a miracle indeed, for was not the gruel cooking without a fire!

"What are you doing?" the baron asked.

"Cooking gruel, my lord."

"Without a fire?"

"Yes. All you have to do is put the jug on a tree stump and run around it, and whatever is in the jug will get cooked."

The baron tried the gruel and found that it was done and very good. He could hardly restrain himself, so eager was he to get the jug for himself. How his friends would stare when he showed it them! Up till then he had only surprised them by his foolishness.

"Sell me your jug!" he begged.

But the shepherd would not, saying that he could not get on without it. Only when the baron had offered him a bag of gold and a horse in return for the jug did he finally agree to part with it.

"Here you are!" he said.

And giving the jug to the baron, he got on the baron's horse, jingled the baron's gold coins in his pocket and rode away.

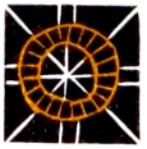
As for the baron, he felt very proud of himself, and going back to his house, invited people from all over the countryside to come and look at the magic jug that he had got a foolish young peasant to give to him.

He put the jug of gruel down on a tree stump and bade

a servant of his run around it. Round and round ran the servant till he was soaking wet with perspiration, but the gruel did not boil. The baron sent his coachman to help out the servant, and the two of them ran round the tree stump together, and still the gruel did not boil. The baron then sent his huntsman to help them out, and the three of them ran round the tree stump together, the servant first, gasping and fighting for breath as he ran, the coachman behind him and the huntsman behind the coachman, but the gruel was as cold as ever. There was nothing for it, so the baron himself now joined them, and the four of them began running round the tree stump together, the baron behind the huntsman, the huntsman behind the coachman, the coachman behind the servant, and the servant behind the baron.

Never had the baron surprised his guests quite so much before. There they stood holding on to their sides, fit to burst with laughter, and some of the ladies laughed so hard that they nearly swooned away. But the baron went on running round the tree stump, hopping and skipping as he did so and never losing hope that the gruel would come to the boil at last!

In fact, he may be at it still—shall we go and see?



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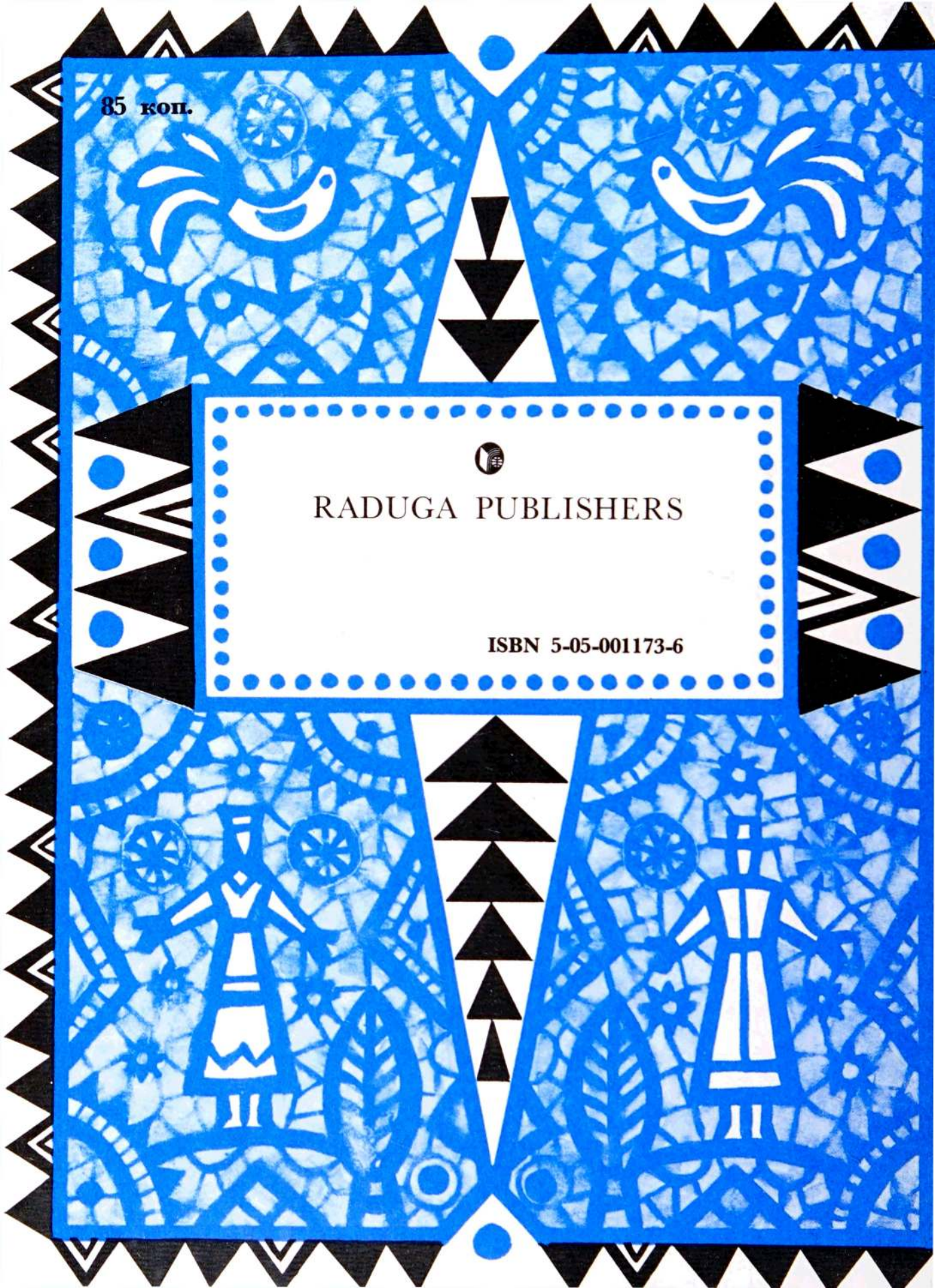

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